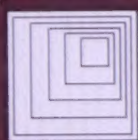


ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMISSION FOR ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

Empowering the Rural Poor through HRD



Six innovative approaches submitted for the
2001 ESCAP HRD Award

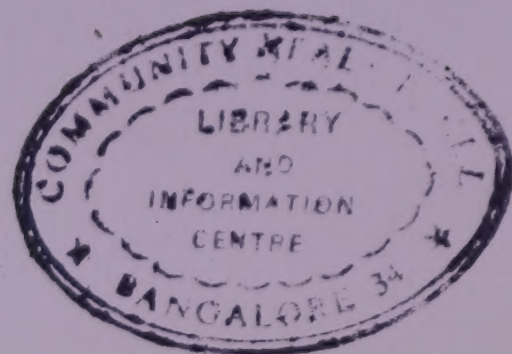


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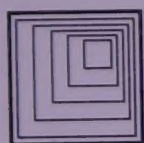
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The photograph on the cover is of a textile created by a rural poor weaver in Lao People's Democratic Republic.

Empowering the Rural Poor through HRD



**Six innovative approaches submitted for the
2001 ESCAP HRD Award**



UNITED NATIONS

New York, 2003

ST/ESCAP/2242

UNITED NATIONS PUBLICATION

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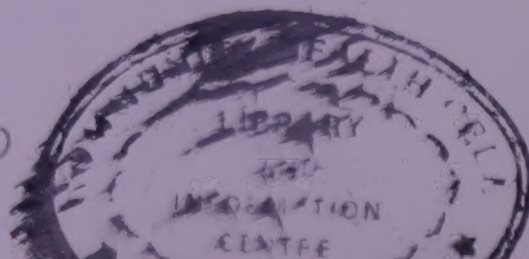
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Preface

Between 1990 and 2002, the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) conferred the ESCAP Human Resources Development Award 10 times in recognition of exceptional contributions made in the area of human resources development (HRD). Established in 1990, the Award distinguished innovative and sustainable approaches to HRD in Asia and the Pacific, in response to the call made by the Jakarta Plan of Action on Human Resources Development in the ESCAP region.

Adopted by ESCAP at its forty-fourth session in 1988 and revised in 1994, the Plan views people as the principal means, as well as the ultimate aim, of development processes. Their well-being should thus be the central goal of such efforts. The Jakarta Plan consists of three interdependent components:

- Investment in human resources to enhance productive capacities;
- Utilization of those human resources to produce increased output;
- Participation of human beings in the consumption of the benefits arising out of that increased output through an enhanced quality of life.

For each round, the ESCAP HRD Award adopted a different theme in line with the Jakarta Plan.

Earlier rounds and winners of the ESCAP HRD Award

<i>Year</i>	<i>Theme</i>	<i>Winner</i>	<i>Country</i>
1990	HRD aspects of the environment	Asian NGO Coalition for Agrarian Reform and Rural Development (ANGOC)	Philippines
1992	HRD aspects of drug abuse demand reduction	Dr. Wan Wenpeng, Yunnan Mental Hospital, Kunming	China
1994	HRD for women in extreme poverty	Dhaka Ahsania Mission	Bangladesh
1995	HRD for productive employment for youth	Social Work and Research Centre (Barefoot College)	India
1996	HRD for people's participation in community development	Sungi Development Foundation	Pakistan
1997	HRD for empowering the urban poor	Human Development Centre	Thailand
1998	HRD through adult education	Department of Non-formal Education	Thailand
1999	HRD for youth empowerment	All-China Youth Federation	China
2000	HRD for the empowerment of people with disabilities	The Spastics Society of Tamilnadu	India

The 2001 ESCAP HRD Award was the tenth and final one in the series. An international jury of experts in the fields of human resources development and poverty reduction conferred the 2001 ESCAP HRD Award on Empowering the Rural Poor upon the Participatory Development Training Centre (PADETC) of the Lao People's Democratic Republic, in recognition of its cutting edge impact on the empowerment of the rural poor in that country.

PADETC's activities in training, appropriate technology, micro enterprise development, media development and social marketing are components of a comprehensive and innovative approach to strengthening the rural poor's livelihood opportunities and participation. One highlight of its programme is an outstanding volunteer scheme designed as an efficient means of community mobilization and capability building. PADETC was also singled out for its creativity in combining education with entertainment and the complementarity of its approach with government efforts in the Lao People's Democratic Republic.

The criteria for selection of the 2001 ESCAP HRD Award-winner included the following:

- Degree of HRD commitment;
- Responsiveness to the needs of the target group;
- Innovativeness of the approach;
- Impact;
- Sustainability of the activity.

The ESCAP secretariat received 44 nominations and applications for the 2001 ESCAP HRD Award from both individuals and organizations in 15 countries in the ESCAP region.

In addition to the winner, the international jury selected Mr Sangkom Thongmee of Thailand as runner-up for his innovative work in using art education to foster the creativity of poor rural children and youth.

The jury also conferred honourable mention upon the Institute of Rural Management, National Rural Support Programme, Pakistan, in recognition of its work in capacity-building of the rural poor.

This publication contains case studies of the Award winner, the runner-up and the honourable mention, as well as three other noteworthy organizations.

The secretariat hopes that the innovative approaches of all six will inspire and serve as a useful reference for others throughout the region in HRD work to empower the rural poor.

The secretariat wishes to express its gratitude to the Government of the Republic of Korea for sponsoring the 2001 ESCAP HRD Award and for providing the funds for this publication.

Message from the Donor Government: Republic of Korea

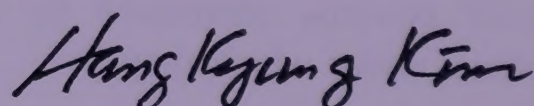
It is estimated that 1.3 billion people around the world survive on less than US\$1 per day. Two-thirds of them live in the Asian and Pacific region and more than three-quarters of them live in rural areas. Often overlooked in the process of national planning and resource allocation, the rural poor are trapped in a vicious cycle of poverty, reinforced by the prevailing socio-economic conditions under which they live.

The theme of the 2001 ESCAP Human Resources Development (HRD) Award is “*Empowering the Rural Poor through HRD*”. Reflecting upon the Republic of Korea’s past experiences in fighting rural poverty through a milestone project called the ‘*Saemaul*’ or ‘New Village’ movement, we cannot over-emphasize the importance of the theme of the Award. The eradication of rural poverty and the development of a sound and sustainable rural community through HRD should constitute the core efforts made by developing countries in the pursuit of economic development and social progress.

A wide range of organizations throughout the public and private sectors, and NGOs in the Asian and Pacific region are working actively in order to empower the rural poor in the region. The 2001 ESCAP HRD Award aims to support these initiatives through recognition of innovative achievement by individuals, governments, NGOs and the private sector.

The Government of the Republic of Korea is pleased to extend its support for the 2001 ESCAP HRD Award, highlighting the special values that it attaches to HRD for the empowerment of the rural poor in the Asian and Pacific region. The contribution of the Government of the Republic of Korea to the 2001 ESCAP HRD Award project marks the second time in five years that it has provided funding support for this unique ESCAP Award.

This publication honours the invaluable work of six candidates for the 2001 ESCAP HRD Award. Their innovation and dedication in forging new paths in the field of HRD for the rural poor is published here in order to share the lessons they have learnt, to stimulate discussions on HRD and rural development issues and to serve as a beacon to encourage further achievement. As the case studies clearly demonstrate, government agencies, non-government organizations and individuals in the region have achieved outstanding work in the field of HRD to empower the rural poor. We commend them for their perseverance, commitment and inspiration.



KIM HANG-KYUNG

Vice Minister

*Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade
Republic of Korea*

Contents

	PAGE
Preface	iii
Message from the Donor Government: Republic of Korea	vii
Introduction	1
Participatory Development Training Centre (PADETC), Lao People’s Democratic Republic	5
Mr Sangkom Thongmee, Thailand	21
Institute of Rural Management, National Rural Support Programme, Pakistan	33
ANAWIM Trust, India	45
Comprehensive and Integrated Delivery of Social Services, Department of Social Welfare and Development, Philippines	57
Kantha Sangwardhena Maha Sangamaya (Women’s Development Federation), Sri Lanka	71



Executive Secretary of ESCAP, Mr Kim Hak-Su, presents a commemorative plaque to the winner.



H.E. Mr Kim Hang-Kyung, Vice-Minister, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Republic of Korea, presents the gift cheque to the winner.

United Nations
Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific

Readership Survey
Health and Development Publications

The Health and Development Section, Emerging Social Issues Division, ESCAP, is conducting a readership survey of the usefulness of its publication titled:

Empowering the Rural Poor through HRD
Six innovative approaches submitted for the 2001 ESCAP HRD Award
[ST/ESCAP/2242]

It would be appreciated if you could complete this questionnaire and return it to us, by air mail or fax, at the following address:

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United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
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Rating for quality and usefulness (Please circle)	Excellent	Very good	Average	Poor	Very poor
1. Please indicate your assessment of the quality of the publication on:					
• presentation/format	5	4	3	2	1
• readability	5	4	3	2	1
• timeliness of information	5	4	3	2	1
• coverage of subject	5	4	3	2	1
• analytical rigour	5	4	3	2	1
• overall quality	5	4	3	2	1
2. How useful is the publication to your work?					
• information	5	4	3	2	1
• identification of issues	5	4	3	2	1
• findings	5	4	3	2	1
• recommendations	5	4	3	2	1
• overall usefulness	5	4	3	2	1

Rating for effectiveness and impact (Please circle)	Com- pletely	Subs- tentially	Suffi- ciently	Insuf- ficiently	Not at all
The objective of this publication is to provide information to promote innovative programmes for empowering the rural poor through HRD.					
3. To what extent has the publication served its objective?	5	4	3	2	1
4. To what extent have you used relevant parts of this publication?	5	4	3	2	1
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Occupation (policy maker, planner, administrator, programme manager, researcher, etc.):	<div>.....</div> <div>.....</div>				
Field of work (education, employment, health, youth development, gender and development, etc.)	<div>.....</div> <div>.....</div>				
Institution (please specify government, intergovernmental, international development, non-governmental, private sector, academic, etc.)	<div>.....</div> <div>.....</div>				
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Thank you for your kind cooperation in completing and returning this questionnaire to us.

Introduction

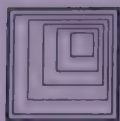
The theme for the 2001 ESCAP HRD Award was “*Empowering the Rural Poor through HRD*”.

An estimated 870 million poor live in the Asian and Pacific region. Approximately 650 million of these people are rural-based. Their progress is hampered by poor access to HRD opportunities and consequent low levels of education, skill development, health, remuneration and participation in rural development. This traps them in a cycle of deprivation that is marked by social and economic disempowerment.

Despite efforts made to address poverty in recent decades, its scale in Asia and the Pacific remains a major development challenge, particularly following the 1997 financial crisis.

Rural people living in poverty are themselves the most important resource for promoting their own development. Empowering the rural poor through HRD means creating and supporting conditions under which they can achieve full participation in society and equality in the development process.

Within the HRD context, empowerment of the rural poor encompasses capability building in the broadest sense. This means strengthening the knowledge, experiences and skills of the rural



poor to enable them to participate in development opportunities. This includes building their physical, economic and environmental assets, as well as their personal, social and political assets. Through these means, they can enlarge their range of choices and enhance their own participation in decision-making that affects their lives.

Much work to empower the rural poor is undertaken in the Asian and Pacific region by Governments, civil society organizations and the private sector. The 2001 ESCAP HRD Award aims to support these initiatives through recognizing these achievements.

This publication records the innovative approaches adopted by five organizations and one individual in the region, whose HRD programmes empower the rural poor:

- Participatory Development Training Centre, Lao People's Democratic Republic
- Mr. Sangkom Thongmee, Thailand
- Institute of Rural Management, National Rural Support Programme, Pakistan
- ANAWIM Trust, India
- Comprehensive and Integrated Delivery of Social Services, Department of Social Welfare and Development, Philippines
- Women's Development Federation, Sri Lanka

The good practices included in this book cover a wide range of approaches, institutional structures, resource bases, economic and social conditions, and priorities. The programmes range from far-reaching governmental programmes to small community-based initiatives, and the efforts of an individual.

The six case studies together constitute an interesting collection of both traditional and modern approaches as well as small, medium and large organizations and individual endeavours. The target groups include rural poor children, youth and women. The case studies are drawn from both South-East Asia and South Asia.



Each of the case studies is organized into five sections. The first section provides an overview of the policy and operational environment in which the organization/individual functions. The second section explains the conceptual basis of the work of the organization/individual, including the goals and main activities. The programme focus and activities are contained in the third section. The fourth section reviews the achievements. The fifth and final section presents lessons drawn from the work described, which might be useful for other organizations and individuals in the region.

Participatory Development Training Centre (PADETC)

Lao People's Democratic Republic

WINNER OF THE 2001 ESCAP HRD AWARD

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Telephone: +856-21-215909

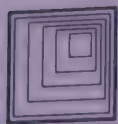
Fax: +856-21-215909

E-mail: *padetc@laotel.com*

A. BACKGROUND

In 1975, Lao People's Democratic Republic emerged from a 30-year war, which left the country devastated by bombs and pocked with unexploded ordnances. More than 300,000 people – about 10 per cent of the total population and 90 per cent of its educated elite – fled the country during the war as refugees, thereby depriving the country of an important human resource base for post-war reconstruction.

It was under such circumstances that the Participatory Development Training Centre (PADETC) began its work in 1980 as the Rice-based Integrated Farming System (RIFS) Project. Starting with a team of three staff members, RIFS focused on food security for poor rural communities, providing training for farmers,



students, teachers and agriculture extension workers on integrated farming and low-input techniques, such as those for producing organic fertilizers, to improve existing agricultural practices.

Over the years, PADETC has expanded its work from strengthening agricultural techniques to improve rural community livelihoods, towards supporting bottom-up, multi-sectoral development planning. In 1996, PADETC was formally recognized by the Government of the Lao People's Democratic Republic as a training institution.

Today, the Lao People's Democratic Republic is a multi-ethnic and predominantly rural country, where over three-quarters of its 5.2 million¹ people live in rural areas. It is landlocked and classified as a least developed country, with a high level of poverty, low life expectancy, and poor infrastructure. While the country is rich in natural resources and, traditionally, enjoys strong social cohesion that serves as a natural social safety net, the vast majority of the population still relies on subsistence agriculture for its livelihood. In recent years, the Government of the Lao People's Democratic Republic has embarked on an open-door economic policy, and many rural persons are gradually learning to participate in, and take advantage of, the market economy.

PADETC works towards empowering the rural poor and strengthening their livelihood opportunities through training, as well as appropriate technology and micro enterprise, media development, and social marketing. In its programmes, PADETC cooperates with government agencies at different administrative levels, as well as with a number of international aid agencies and NGOs.

B. CONCEPTUAL BASIS

1. Goal

PADETC's mission is to contribute to the creation of an enabling environment for Lao citizens of all ages to work together, in partnership with the Government, on managing and solving

¹ World Bank, "Country at a Glance" data, 2000. Available online at <http://www.worldbank.org/data/countrydata/countrydata.html>; accessed 26 March 2002.



their own problems, with increasing independence from external assistance. In the process, PADETC seeks to evolve a development approach that is appropriate for, and unique to, the cultural, social and environmental circumstances of the Lao People's Democratic Republic.

PADETC's specific objectives include the following, to:

- Train farmers on appropriate technology in food production and processing, resource management, and income generation;
- Assist, at the local government level, in developing a planning and management system that supports integrated development with the full participation of stakeholders;
- Develop and utilize training modules and tools for promoting hands-on learning from practical experience in real-life situations;
- Train a new generation of leaders on sustainable development.

2. Approach

PADETC's approach is based on its conviction that the development of the Lao People's Democratic Republic ultimately depends on the Lao people themselves. Thus, PADETC works at the grass-roots level to build the capabilities of the rural poor. It builds on the existing strengths of Lao society to find solutions that use local resources and local materials. PADETC's role is that of a facilitator of development, fostering conditions for the rural poor to acquire the skills for solving their own problems, to lift themselves out of poverty.

Participation is the common thread that runs through all PADETC activities. The involvement of all groups, including women and ethnic minorities, is encouraged. PADETC focuses on the poorest and works directly with such communities. In addition, special attention is given to youth as an important force for social change, since a vibrant society needs to prepare its young to participate in its own development.



PADETC is a training centre that also undertakes development research. It supports the Government in bringing together the benefits of both national and local-level development programmes to impact on the rural poor. Based on its extensive experience in grass-root work and participatory processes, PADETC complements the programmes of national and local government agencies and international development organizations through information sharing, training, and networking.

C. PROGRAMME FOCUS AND ACTIVITIES

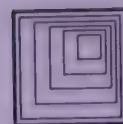
PADETC has the following four Units:

- 1. Training and Development Unit.
- 2. Appropriate Technology and Micro-enterprise Unit.
- 3. Media for Development Unit.
- 4. Social Marketing Unit.

The work of the four Units is integrated. Appropriate technology can be introduced through the Training and Development Unit, or through films produced by the Media for Development Unit. Farmers produce new goods as a result of the programmes of the Appropriate Technology and Micro-enterprise Unit, and market the goods through links established by the Social Marketing Unit. The Media for Development Unit provides training to staff members and youth on media production for more effective dissemination of new knowledge and development messages.



Developing youth skills for rural community service.



1. Training and Development Unit

The Training and Development Unit works to prepare Lao people of all ages for a globalizing world through capability building. It has two main areas of activity: non-formal education for adults, and extracurricular activities for in-school youth.

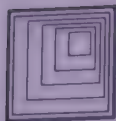
a. Non-formal education for adults

PADETC develops training modules and conducts training sessions for rural communities, as well as trainers from government agencies, such as the Lao Women's Union (LWU), and aid organizations. The training modules and sessions cover topics such as participatory village development planning, project planning and management, and participatory rural appraisal. Stress is placed on participatory processes, as well as on developing conceptual, analytical, observation and problem-solving skills. Appropriate technologies are introduced through the Training and Development Unit to government officials and youth, so that they may further disseminate the technologies in their work with the rural poor.

b. Extracurricular activities for in-school youth

To nurture the potential for participation and leadership among Lao youth, PADETC has developed innovative extracurricular activities for in-school youth, in the form of training camps and community service. The activities are designed for specific age groups and to cater to youth interests. They aim to develop the leadership, creativity, and social and analytical skills of youth volunteers. The activities incorporate positive traditional Lao practices and support rural community activities, while preventing youth from turning to harmful activities, such as drug and alcohol abuse, and crime.

Peer learning is stressed in all PADETC youth programmes. Youth volunteers who undergo the training camps organize themselves for community service in rural areas and “*edutain*” (i.e., educate and entertain) their rural counterparts through songs, games, stories and drama. These activities enable the youth to have fun and express their creativity, while addressing issues such



Youth volunteers produce puppet shows for rural children.

as substance abuse, environmental conservation, personal hygiene, cultural heritage, social harmony, and gender equality. The youth volunteers also promote bio-diversity conservation and organic farming among farmers, through demonstration of appropriate technology and training of trainer techniques and screening of documentary and training films. Furthermore, the youth develop their own weekly radio programmes and newsletters to reach wider audiences.

A number of the youth activities are being incorporated into the government-managed youth centres in seven provinces, namely, Bokeo, Sayaboury, Luang Prabang, Vientiane Municipality, Borikhamsay, Khammouane, and Savannakhet. Songs, plays and games created

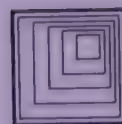
by youth and that have strong development content are being used in the youth centres, and are also being introduced, through community service, in many schools in rural areas and provincial towns.

With increased social awareness, the Lao youth will be better able to understand poverty in Lao society, and thus prepare themselves to constructively engage in reducing it.

2. Appropriate Technology and Micro-enterprise Unit

The Appropriate Technology and Micro-enterprise Unit is responsible for identifying and introducing technologies for development that are appropriate to the unique cultural, economic and environmental conditions of Lao PDR.

PADETC introduces appropriate technologies to the rural poor, such as labour-saving devices (e.g., fuel-efficient stoves), sanitation infrastructure (e.g., simple latrines and garbage separation facilities), energy-saving tools (e.g., solar driers for processing fish), and sustainable agriculture techniques (e.g., preparation and



use of organic fertilisers and insecticides). Some technologies are provided free of charge and the local communities are taught how to use them. Others, which require more capital to produce, are promoted through supporting rural community members to establish and run micro-enterprises to produce the technologies. After identifying potential producers through initial training, PADETC provides them with small loans as start-up capital.

All the technologies are low-cost and environmentally-friendly. The programme emphasizes technology and techniques that villagers can use within their own technical, resource and financial capacities. These help villagers to develop confidence in taking the initiative to improve their living conditions, and ensure that improvements are sustainable.

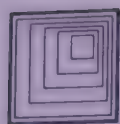
3. Media for Development Unit

The Media for Development Unit facilitates the use of the mass media as a means of widely disseminating those techniques and approaches that have been proven appropriate and sustainable.

PADETC is a pioneer in developing the use of the mass media to both receive and transmit development messages. It produces videos on topics concerning appropriate technology and environmental conservation, and makes them available to all provincial television stations. PADETC selectively adapts and translates relevant foreign-produced materials, while Lao films are translated into other languages for international audiences.

PADETC supports the Government's media activities by training media personnel on television and radio programme production. The training covers all aspects from planning and budgeting, to scriptwriting for different types of programmes (e.g., documentary, drama, and news), to filming and recording. Producers are trained to identify, in the planning stages of production, clear objectives, the target audience, content, and messages for their programmes.

Using the media, PADETC has helped establish a dynamic participatory forum of Lao people, drawing in the voices of those who might otherwise not be heard. It encourages the



development of participatory media, such as talk shows on development and environmental issues that can stimulate lively debate and allow for villager participation. Such two-way communication facilitates grass-root feedback to be generated for the attention of policy makers, providing them with information that they need to be more responsive to community issues. Local television stations associated with PADETC have also given rural communities the opportunity to produce their own programmes.

4. Social Marketing Unit

The Social Marketing Unit works to popularize the products and processes introduced by the Appropriate Technology Unit, towards sustainable development. It educates the public to be informed consumers and the sellers to be socially responsible business people.

PADETC trains rural producers to run their micro-enterprises effectively by developing their skills in planning, finance and marketing. Furthermore, in order to promote local production and generate many more new viable enterprises based on appropriate technology, PADETC links the rural producers to the market by organizing a marketing system. A network of sellers



Fair trade shops help rural producers reach more consumers.



Banana pride and joy.



Using PADETC techniques to produce delicious sun-dried bananas – a marketable delicacy.

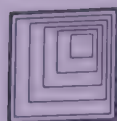
and producers is being built, through which rural poor producers are able to market their goods for increased income. In cooperation with the Ministry of Industry and Handicraft, PADETC has initiated the organization of a monthly weekend farmers' market in Vientiane. At this market, rural producers can sell their goods directly to consumers. PADETC is currently exploring the possibility of establishing export market links.

D. ACHIEVEMENTS

1. Responsiveness

Over the years, PADETC's focus has shifted as the needs of the rural poor have changed. Implementation has been almost entirely in villages in the provinces, in order to meet the needs of the rural poor. PADETC ensures responsiveness to such needs by supporting the decisions of the communities. The approaches and training tools developed by PADETC are relevant, appropriate and easily understood by Lao villagers.

One innovative example is Bio Extract (BE; see box 1), a solution rich in micro-organisms, which is cultured from leafy or fruity materials. It can be produced by anyone, anywhere, and does not require any imports, supply chains, or costly purchases. It has



Box 1: Locally-produced organic fertilizer gives excellent results

Chemical fertilizers and pesticides are not only expensive, but harmful to the health of people and the environment. PADETC has demonstrated that locally-produced fertilizer, known as *BE* (bio-extract), gives just as high a yield as modern chemical fertilizer. In addition *BE* has other advantages:

- It is cheap.
- It does not contaminate the soil and improves the soil structure.
- It can be made locally by farmers using locally-available materials.
- The produce is safer to eat, tastes better and has a longer shelf life.

Mr. Champa, a farmer in Na Hai Village in Hatsaifong District, Municipality of Vientiane, had been using chemical fertilizer and pesticide for years on his 1.2 hectare-size paddy field. His harvest had never been more than 45 bags of rice (or 1.7 ton/ha.). Since he changed to using *BE* organic fertilizer, however, he now produces 70 bags (or 2.6 ton/ha.). His investment for *BE* is only 100,000 kip (or US\$10), compared with his earlier investment of 700,000 kip (or US\$70) for chemical fertilizer. By switching to using *BE*, Mr. Champa not only gets a better yield, he is also saving money and improving his soil.



Healthy rice plant grown with BE.



Using BE to produce organic fertilizer from rice husk, manure, and other local materials.

Many other farmers in the village are following Mr Champa's example. This year, seven other farmers in his village adopted this practice. There are also similar stories from districts in other provinces where *BE* has been successfully adopted. To take this to scale, the PADETC team is now working closely with the Lao Youth Union to promote the use of *BE* through youth networks throughout the country.



multiple uses as a pesticide, a water purifier, an animal and fish growth stimulator, and a disinfectant. It can also be used to make organic fertilizer or to produce compost. BE is being promoted through coordination between two PADETC Units, those for Training and Development, and Media for Development.

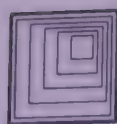
Within the context of the Government of the Lao People's Democratic Republic's open-door economic policy, PADETC helps farmers by providing training in appropriate technology to increase livelihood opportunities and by raising awareness of the need to balance economic growth with social harmony and environmental sustainability. PADETC also assists farmers to get their products to the market to compete with imported goods.

The innovative use of media is responsive to the poorly developed infrastructure that impedes timely flow of information. PADETC provides television stations with materials to air so that up-to-date development messages and information may reach a wide audience, including those in isolated communities.

2. Impact

In the past five years, over 34,000 people have directly benefited from PADETC's programmes. The indirect beneficiaries, reached through those who were trained by PADETC, number over 180,000.

PADETC has improved the livelihood of the rural poor in the Lao People's Democratic Republic through the introduction of low-cost and eco-friendly technologies. For example, sustainable farming techniques, such as bio-intensive gardening, have been widely adopted, including in three regional teacher training colleges and agricultural schools, and are being transferred to many rural communities through the network of LWU cadres. This has helped improve the nutritional status of many rural students and households.



Box 2: Start young



Children listen avidly to a story told by a PADETC volunteer.

PADETC started the Love Reading Project, in co-operation with the Government and some non-governmental organizations, to nurture in young children a love for reading and to supplement schools which are often poorly equipped and lack reading materials.

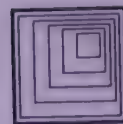
PADETC adapted a storytelling technique commonly used in Japan, where stories are read out to children using a series of

picture cards. The storyteller holds up the picture cards and reads the text, which is printed on the back, and makes the stories lively and fun by using dramatization and interactive techniques.

Children love the storytelling and become interested in making their own stories and cards. They write and illustrate the stories themselves, and perform for their peers. The activities help children learn Lao language skills better and more rapidly than through traditional means. Typically, teachers observe that children acquire Lao language reading skills towards the end of the second grade. With this storytelling technique, a good number of children can read Lao fluently by the end of the first grade. Many children are also reported to have become much more confident and less shy, able to perform in front of other students and even in front of a large audience.

This storytelling technique can also be used to help change behaviour. Bor Ou Secondary School, located just outside Vientiane recently built school latrines to promote better sanitation. The students did not use them because they did not know how they were used. The teachers, with help from PADETC volunteers, used storytelling to teach children that, while animals may defecate anywhere, human beings should not. Now, the students use toilets so as not to be equated with animals.

In 2002, 57 illustrated stories have been produced through the project and are being used in schools, as well as in the community. PADETC estimates that at least 200,000 people have listened to one story or another at some point in time over the last 12 months. In 2002 alone, PADETC trained teachers from over 50 primary schools in the Municipality of Vientiane in the storytelling technique. In 2003, training will be expanded to schools in the provinces.

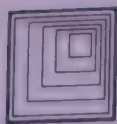


In the case of the highly successful fuel-efficient stoves, in 1999, 27 rural producers in 7 provinces made 45,000 units. These fuel-efficient stoves help lower firewood consumption, hence contributing to forest conservation efforts, and save 60 per cent to 70 per cent of Lao women's labour in gathering firewood. The stoves are widely popular and are now available in most provincial towns. A small number have been exported to Cambodia, Thailand and Viet Nam.

PADETC's participatory and people-centred methods have impacted the Government's approach towards development. The LWU, for example, continues to use participatory techniques in all of its rural development projects. PADETC and LWU also set up multi-sectoral development committees at provincial and district levels to coordinate and manage integrated rural development projects. Furthermore, many of the women village volunteers trained by PADETC in the 1980s and 1990s have become District Heads of the LWU, while others have attained positions of influence at the provincial level. These have all helped to further increase the rural poor's confidence in the Government.

With regard to youth community service, anywhere between 1,400 to 70,000² rural community members have been served each month by the youth volunteers, who spread messages on topics such as the prevention of substance abuse, dangers of excessive consumerism, and promotion of environmental conservation. Several school principals have noted that students who participated in the youth programmes tend to be more mature, responsible, confident, more creative and analytical, all of which are important for the development of a modern and cohesive society. The most immediate evidence that PADETC is effectively building youth capability is that many university graduates, who have undergone training with PADETC, have been snapped up by government agencies and international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) as development officers.

² Currently, there are between 200 to 700 youth volunteers in the seven youth centres. They go out in groups of 10 to 20 to provide community service to rural schools and communities. On each occasion, a group may reach between 100 to 500 rural poor community members in the course of community service. On average, activities are held twice a month on weekends.



Box 3: Recycling waste to keep the city clean

To deal with the city garbage problem, PADETC set up a garbage recycling enterprise, the Lao Chalern Recycling Centre (LCRC). The LCRC now collects and sells about 633 tons of paper, metal, and plastics each year, or about 3.5 per cent of the 18,000 tons of the annual recyclable waste produced by Vientiane city. With this modest start, the recycling project has gradually gained public recognition and is expanding rapidly.

A network of PADETC volunteers, composed of mainly university students, regularly conducts consciousness-raising campaigns in some 30 communities and schools on the outskirts of the city. Twenty communities and schools have set up recycling banks or subsidiaries of the LCRC. Students and community members deposit their recyclable garbage in their community or school recycling banks once or twice a week. Once the storage capacity of the recycling bank is full, the local manager informs the LCRC to come to collect and pay for the garbage. The proceeds from the sale are divided among the members according to their deposit record.

In this way, Sit, a third grade student, made US\$30 last semester. The money she earned from selling garbage paid for her entire year's school supplies, not an insignificant contribution for a child and her poor family.

Garbage recycling was given a major publicity boost when Nongbuathong Tai Primary School, a LCRC subsidiary, won the 2002 United Nations Lao Country Award on "Poverty Reduction through Environmental Protection" for its exemplary work in educating children about environmental protection through its school recycling bank. Now many communities and schools around the city want to start similar garbage recycling banks.



*Garbage collected by
Nong Bua Thong Tai
Primary School students
is weighed and credited,
and then recycled.*



E. LESSONS LEARNED

PADETC has been instrumental in building local institutions, improving capabilities and assisting in the development of a corps of volunteers, production groups, and small business enterprises throughout the Lao People's Democratic Republic. The major features behind PADETC's success can be summed up as follows:

- 1. Using appropriate solutions that are unique to the Lao context helps ensure that development activities are accepted by the rural poor.**

The elegant simplicity and relative inexpensiveness of the appropriate technology help address the target group's immediate needs. They increase the likelihood that the rural poor will continue using and adapting the technology, thus ensuring the long-term sustainability of the programme's benefits to the Lao people. The technologies are also environmentally friendly, which means that they will help prevent the rapid depletion of the Lao People's Democratic Republic's rich natural resources.

- 2. The mass media can be a powerful tool for reaching the rural poor.**

This is particularly true if it fosters two-way communication and serves as a conduit for the voices of the rural poor. The innovative use of media is especially important in a country with poor infrastructure, such as the Lao People's Democratic Republic, where the flow of information is slow and many communities live in a state of isolation. At the same time, PADETC notes that reaching the remotest areas of the Lao People's Democratic Republic is still its greatest challenge.

- 3. Partnership with government agencies can be essential to the success of development activities.**

The establishment of close alliances with government agencies and building credibility and partnership with mass party organizations and government officials, especially at the provincial and district levels, is useful for all parties involved. Such partnerships help facilitate greater participation by the rural poor nationwide in the development process.



4. Youth participation helps build the foundation for long-term development.

PADETC's activities for youth have the immediate benefit of keeping the youth engaged in interesting and formative activities, which steer them away from anti-social behaviour. Through the programme, youth learn valuable life skills and gain knowledge for dissemination to their peers and others in the rural areas. Building the capabilities of the youth means helping to build the future of the country. PADETC's contribution towards the growth of the Lao People's Democratic Republic is not only for the present, but also for the future.

Mr Sangkom Thongmee

Thailand

RUNNER-UP FOR THE 2001 ESCAP HRD AWARD

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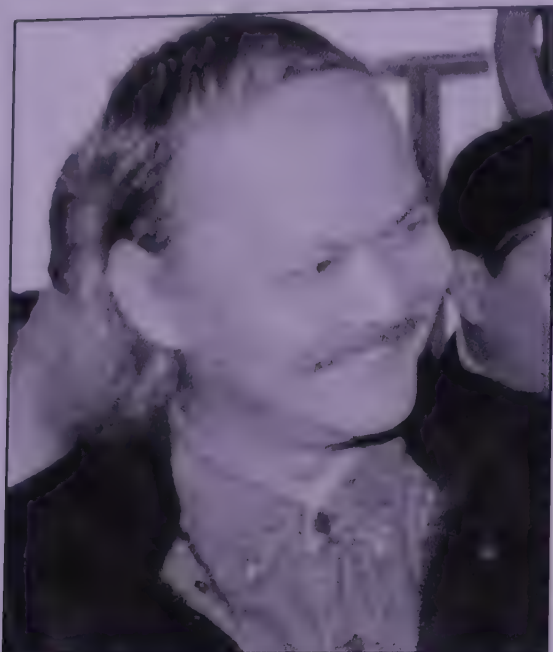
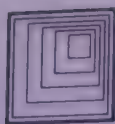
A. BACKGROUND

In the past 30 years, Thailand has undergone a dramatic transformation, marked by rapid economic growth that saw a four-fold increase in per capita GDP and significant reduction in poverty levels.¹ However, there has been an uneven distribution of the benefits of economic growth within the country. Today, 78 per cent² of Thailand's 61.7 million people live in rural areas and approximately 42 per cent are under the age of 24.³ There are still wide income disparities between urban and rural areas, as well as in access to social services. While primary education facilities are widespread in Thailand, most higher educational institutions are concentrated in Bangkok.

¹ National Statistical Office, Office of the Prime Minister, Thailand. 2002. Available online at <http://www.nso.go.th>; accessed 15 July 2002.

² United Nations Statistics Division. 2000. Available online at <http://www.un.org/Depts/unsd/social/hum-set.htm>; accessed 29 March 2002.

³ United States Census Bureau. *IDB Summary Demographic Data for Thailand*. 2000. Available online at <http://www.census.gov/ipc/www/idbsum.html>; accessed 29 March 2002.



Mr Sangkom Thongmee

In the rural areas, despite recent new efforts to promote more interactive, child-centred learning, schools still tend to suffer from two major constraints:

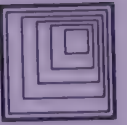
1. Lack of resources and well-trained teachers;
2. Reliance on out-dated educational methods, such as rote memorization, which neither nurture children's creativity nor prepare them for active participation in the democratic process later in life.

Mr Thongmee, himself an artist, has worked with rural poor children and youth since 1978, primarily as an art educator in Loei Province where he grew up. Loei is located in north-eastern Thailand. It is one of the poorest regions of the country, and some 83 per cent of its population are rural. In 2000, average monthly income per person in the north-eastern region was just a quarter that of Bangkok.⁴ Communities in the region faced nutritional deficiency and had limited social services in education, and health and hygiene.⁵

From early on in his teaching career, Mr Thongmee saw the potential of using art as a means to foster the creativity and imagination of his young students. Having come himself from a poor labourer family that discouraged his interest in art, Mr Thongmee was well aware of the prevailing attitudes in rural areas that often dismissed art study as “nonsense”. Even today, he continues to work tirelessly to overcome such attitudes, to pioneer the use of art education in rural schools so that the “spiritual basic needs” of rural children and youth are met. Mr Thongmee shares his passion for art and self-expression by teaching and promoting art in Thailand, so that rural poor children and youth may enjoy fuller and better lives.

⁴ National Statistical Office, Office of the Prime Minister, Thailand. 2001. Available online at <http://www.nso.go.th>; accessed 10 July 2002.

⁵ Bank of Thailand. Available online at http://www.bot.or.th/bothomepage/databank/RegionEcon/n_east/econne/text/english/structure_ea.htm; accessed 29 March 2002.



B. CONCEPTUAL BASIS

1. Goal

Through art education, Mr Thongmee aims to foster the development of the intellectual and spiritual potential of rural poor children and youth. Mr Thongmee uses art to help stimulate young people's imagination and foster their creative thinking and social skills. In Mr Thongmee's experience, art serves as a means of expanding their horizons and improving their opportunities beyond the limitations imposed by their families' lack of financial resources.

"The main objective of my teaching is to build up my pupils' self-confidence, for up-country students are always unsure of their own abilities. I want them to see the value inside themselves. Also, I want them to be able to express their thoughts and feelings by using art as a medium. I'm convinced that art can help develop a child's mind."⁶

2. Approach

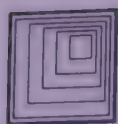
Mr Thongmee's activities are based on his belief that creativity inspires a child's soul and engages his or her mind to undertake challenges never before dreamed of. He calls the approach "Art for Life" – art is used as means to develop the minds of young people in a way that is not possible with the limited educational opportunities in rural schools. Building the self-confidence of rural children and youth and their ability to express themselves helps them to work towards a fuller life and to participate in the development of their society.

C. PROGRAMME FOCUS AND ACTIVITIES

1. Princess Sirindhorn Art Centre

Apart from teaching art and serving as Chief of the Art Education Section in Sri Songkram Vittaya School, Loei Province, Mr Thongmee established the Princess Sirindhorn Art Centre in

⁶ "Would-be architect finds his real vocation in teaching", *Bangkok Post*, Outlook Section, 3 February 2002, p. 8.



1994. Located at the Sri Songkram Vittaya School, the Centre is the oldest youth art centre in Thailand. Its staff members are five full-time artists and teachers, including Mr Thongmee. Through activities at the Centre, rural poor children and youth gain the opportunity to develop their imagination, and creative thinking and social skills. Instruction and supplies are provided

free of charge. Funding for the Art Centre comes from both government and private sources, as well as proceeds from exhibitions and fund-raising activities.

a. Art camps

The Art Centre organizes three-day art camps for children, primarily those aged 6 to 12. The camps are organized upon request, such as by provincial schools, and are financed by the schools. Each camp is attended by approximately 200 students. The children may try their hand at different art techniques, including drawing, painting, sculpture and print-making, under the guidance of the Art Centre staff.

Each camp is also attended by 30 to 40 rural primary school teachers whose duties include teaching art. However, most of them have never been trained in art teaching or art itself. The Art Centre offers seminars on how to teach art to young rural students, covering topics such as the goals of art education, basic art theory, art techniques and teaching methods, and management of art supplies.

In addition, the Art Centre organizes special events and workshops with prominent artists from Bangkok and Chiang Mai.



b. Exhibitions and competitions

Numerous exhibitions of the rural, poor students' artwork are mounted throughout the year. The Art Centre organizes monthly exhibitions of local students. Mr Thongmee has also organized an international exhibition, with entries from countries such as Japan and the United States of America. Mr Thongmee mobilizes funding from corporate sponsors to organize such exhibitions and competitions.

The students regularly enter art competitions. In the past 15 years, they have won over 3,000 awards from national and international art competitions. For example, in 1992, Mr Thongmee's students won 36 awards (selected out of over 13,000 paintings from 46 countries) at the Rainbow 1992 International Children's Art Contest in Zanka, Hungary, and 52 prizes (out of 316,907 entries from 67 countries) at the 23rd International Children's Art Exhibition 1993, held in Tokyo.

c. Community outreach

Gaining the understanding of the rural communities is one of Mr Thongmee's priorities. Parents and other community members are invited to the Art Centre for ceremonies and exhibitions of their children's artwork. The Art Centre regularly receives visits from teachers and students who are curious to learn what takes place at the Centre. Students also contribute to community projects, such as painting murals in local temples, which help showcase their talents and facilitates wider appreciation of art.

2. Scholarships

In 1993, Mr Thongmee established the Princess Sirindhorn Arts Foundation to provide small scholarships to poor rural students. Each scholarship amounts to 2,000 baht (approximately US\$44) per year. Mr Thongmee mobilizes larger scholarships of at least 40,000 baht per year on a case-by-case basis from private and corporate sponsors, so that outstanding students may continue studying at vocational schools and universities.



D. ACHIEVEMENTS

1. Responsiveness

The activities undertaken by Mr Thongmee respond to the need for more relevant, student-centred education, as well as for greater educational opportunities, in a rural poor region of Thailand.

In the poor north-eastern province, children have fewer opportunities to continue their education beyond primary level, due overwhelmingly to financial constraints. Furthermore, beyond the basic levels of literacy and arithmetic, many farming families do not see the relevance of schooling, particularly as they do not see the schools adequately preparing their children for better lives. The drop-out rate in rural Thailand, particularly in the north-eastern region, is consistently high, compared with that of Bangkok and its vicinity. In 1997, among 15 to 17 year olds, it was 31.3 per cent for rural youth, compared with 25.4 per cent for urban youth.⁷ Furthermore, the north-eastern region has the lowest transition rate (the percentage of students in a given school year who continue in the following school year) from the primary to the lower secondary level. Overall, 10 per cent more 15 to 17 year-olds are out of school in the north-eastern region, compared with the situation in Bangkok.⁸

As a result of Mr Thongmee's activities, children gain opportunities to continue their schooling, by winning scholarships for further study. This is highly responsive to the fact that financial limitations are the predominant reason that prevents the school children from continuing their education.

⁷ National Statistics Office, Office of the Prime Minister, Thailand. *Report on Children and Youth Survey 1997*. According to a 2001 report by the Office of the National Education Commission (Office of the Prime Minister), *Education in Thailand 2001/2002*, the Department of General Education reports that drop-out rates at the lower and upper secondary levels are somewhat higher in the north-eastern region compared to the whole country (1.72 per cent in the Northeast, compared to 1.63 per cent overall).

⁸ National Statistics Office, Office of the Prime Minister, Thailand. 1999. Available online at <http://www.nso.go.th>; accessed 10 July 2002.



The activities also address the situation that rural children are less likely than urban children to receive intellectual stimulation. The horizons of rural poor children and youth are broadened not only through access to further education, but also by contact with the wider world through participation in national and international exhibitions and competitions. This brings them into contact with a variety of ideas and perspectives.



Perhaps, most importantly, targeting poor children and youth in rural areas helps the young persons to fulfil their potential for participation and expression. Mr Thongmee's approach is to encourage each child's creativity. For example, a child would never be told that he or she is wrong to colour a whale orange. Instead, the child would be encouraged to use whatever colours he or she wishes. Rural poor children and youth are usually shy, compared with their urban peers. Providing them with the means to express themselves helps them to gradually gain self-confidence.

The numerous awards won by Mr Thongmee's students at national and international art competitions indicate their high level of achievement. While winning prizes is not the primary goal of the art education activities, it is a bonus in that it provides an additional boost to the students' confidence.

2. Impact

Through art education for children, Mr Thongmee contributes to the development of dynamic youth who are able to undertake challenges never before dreamed of, who can become the next generation of active, expressive, creative citizens of Thailand. By helping young people to channel their time and energies into the positive act of creation, Mr Thongmee has also helped prevent youth from resorting to anti-social behaviour, such as drug abuse.



As a result of participating in the art education activities, it is reported that the children “were suddenly much more motivated in their studies.... Through their excellence in art, many children from poor families were awarded scholarships to continue their studies in Bangkok.”⁹ Thanks to these positive outcomes, Mr Thongmee and art education are gradually gaining acceptance among rural parents. The awards brought in money for the children as well as for their parents. Many students have gone on to study and train at vocational schools and universities. A number of them have even embarked on careers as architects, graphic designers, and art teachers. They are able to make a better living than their parents, and can provide economic support for their rural families.

Mr Thongmee’s tireless efforts in promoting art education has also impacted formal education and non-formal education. As a result of efforts such as his, the Ministry of Education will be adjusting the national art curriculum for all Thai schools.

Through the years, Mr Thongmee has gradually won the respect and support of rural poor communities in Loei, as well as in other areas of Thailand. His work has changed the attitudes of the rural poor, to accept and appreciate art as an important part of a child’s development, to which every child is entitled.

⁹ “Art Works”, *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 28 August 1997, p. 70.



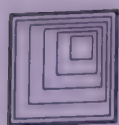
E. LESSONS LEARNED

The success of Mr Thongmee's work in spreading art education in Loei Province of Thailand, as well as other regions of Thailand, is testimony to the demand for education that fosters creative and expressive individuals who are empowered to play an active role in the development of their own society. The following summarizes the major features of Mr Thongmee's work:

1. Art education is an innovative approach to development.

It is not enough that the rural poor can feed themselves. Developing the minds and creativity of rural young persons is just as important. In fact, paying attention to the mental and psychological development of rural poor children and youth is a critical part of their overall empowerment. Mr Thongmee's goal is to see art education centres, similar to his own, set up in every province of Thailand, so that a larger number of rural poor children and youth can access good art education and have the opportunity to develop their creativity.





2. Children and youth are effective conduits to reach the community at large.

Through the children and youth, the activities also reach the adults of the community. Art exhibits and ceremonies at the Art Centre bring villagers together, helping to strengthen their sense of community. Involving the wider community also contributes to efforts to change dismissive attitudes towards art and its role in the development of children and youth, not just for the present, but also for future generations.

3. The expressive and creative potential of rural poor children and youth needs to be recognized and nurtured.

Simply because rural children and youth are shyer than their urban peers does not mean that they are less creative. Art is not just for the urban rich. It can have just as strong an impact on the rural poor. Indeed, art education may have a greater impact on the rural poor because they have much less access to creative outlets. Thus, giving the rural poor the opportunity to express themselves through art education has an even higher significance than for those who have easy access to such opportunities.



Painting by Phuntira Karpipit (10 years old).



4. Linking with the private sector is necessary to face the challenge of sustainability.

The spread of art education was made possible with significant support from individual sponsors and private sector organizations. Mr Thongmee has successfully mobilized support by targeting those in the country who are able to, and are interested in, making contributions to an increasingly well-known and respected movement. However, Mr Thongmee notes that long-term sustainability is still a challenge for the Art Centre. Particularly after the 1997 East Asian economic crisis, fewer Bangkok-based companies are able or willing to act as sponsors. Mr Thongmee is therefore in the process of establishing a fund, which would allow for a more systematic means to finance the Art Centre's activities and the scholarships for rural poor children and youth.



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Institute of Rural Management, National Rural Support Programme

Pakistan

HONOURABLE MENTION FOR THE 2001 ESCAP HRD AWARD

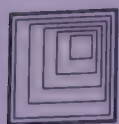
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A. BACKGROUND

Poverty has increased in the past three decades in Pakistan, and inequality is widening. 1995 estimates indicate there were 42 million people living in absolute poverty in Pakistan – a staggering one-third of the entire population – with 70 per cent of the poor being rural-based. According to some reports, nearly 54 per cent of the adult population above the age of 15 cannot read or write,¹ with almost 65 per cent of the adult female population being illiterate.² Of the total population of 138.1 million, as many as 16.6 million (12 per cent of the total population) have no

¹ World Bank data, 2002. Available online at <http://www.worldbank.org>; accessed 28 March 2002.

² ESCAP Statistics Division, Asia and the Pacific in Figures 2000. Available online at <http://www.unescap.org>; accessed 20 February 2002.



access to safe drinking water, and 63 million (45 per cent) have no access to basic health services. Eight million children are denied opportunities for education.³

Recognizing the need for an organization that could support development initiatives in the country, the Government of Pakistan provided seed capital to set up, in 1991, the National Rural Support Programme (NRSP). The organization's objective is to foster a country-wide network of rural community organizations that plan, implement and manage their own development activities, in partnership with government and other agencies, to ensure productive employment, poverty alleviation, and improvement in the quality of life.

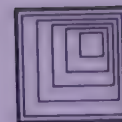
Towards this end, NRSP focuses on social mobilization and capacity building of the rural poor and their organizations through programmes for enhancing skills, promoting savings and creating access to micro-credit. As of June 2001, NRSP had a total of 14,027 community organizations, with a membership of over 303,213, in 27 districts of Pakistan.

In 2001, the Institute of Rural Management (IRM) was established as a distinct entity, having evolved from the Human Resources Development Branch of NRSP. IRM supports NRSP's work specifically through skills enhancement. It seeks to build the capacity of the NRSP-affiliated community organizations through community management skills training and leadership management skills training. These would allow the rural poor to independently manage and implement their development initiatives, even after the withdrawal of the NRSP support mechanism.

Over the years, IRM's programmes have expanded to cater to a wider audience. In addition to working with NRSP-affiliated community organizations, IRM works with other development organizations to support the capacity enhancement of their staff.

While IRM's operational budget comes from NRSP, the Institute generates its own programme budget through capacity-building activities.

³ Statistics are from *Human Development in South Asia 2001*, Mahbub ul Haq Human Development Centre (Pakistan, Oxford University Press, 2002).



B. CONCEPTUAL BASIS

1. Goal

The overall goal of IRM is to improve the quality of life of the rural poor through capacity building and skill enhancement, specifically by fostering and upgrading technical and managerial skills at the grass-roots level.

IRM's immediate objectives are to:

- (a) Develop a cadre of community-level managers and leaders;
- (b) Develop a cadre of village-level specialists in natural resource management, vocational skills training, and other fields that are relevant to the local environment;
- (c) Develop a cadre of professional social organizers and other development professionals who are committed to identifying and working with the existing social capital at the grass-roots;
- (d) Sensitize and involve officials of government and private agencies in community development processes.

2. Approach

IRM provides various types of training, as required by the NRSP-fostered community organizations with which it works. The training programmes are designed based on identified community needs and convenience. In all of IRM's programmes, the members of the organizations identify their own needs, determine and design appropriate training courses, identify the trainees and monitor the trainees' work upon completion of the courses. Thus, the solutions are designed in line with the capacity and resources of the rural poor.

Focus is placed on increasing the rural poor's access to various resources by establishing linkages, particularly between the communities and government agencies. In the training programmes, efforts are made to utilize existing government and private training facilities.



IRM also develops village-level master trainers so that the training programmes can be made available to a larger population. Training programmes include a component on training of trainers, so that participants become subject specialists, who then train other community members. In this manner, the new knowledge benefits not only the immediate trainees, but also other villagers to whom the trainees are expected to pass on their knowledge.

The training programmes are designed to empower rural poor community members to:

- Assume grass-roots level leadership;
- Enhance farm productivity;
- Obtain employment opportunities;
- Gain literacy skills and access health facilities.

To ensure that the rural poor have a sense of ownership over the programmes, the trainees or their community organization are charged small user fees for the training.

C. PROGRAMME FOCUS AND ACTIVITIES

Based on the needs of the community and community organizations, IRM provides community training in order to build the rural poor's capabilities in the following four areas of focus:

1. Community Management and Leadership Skills.
2. Natural Resource Management.
3. Vocational Skills.
4. Social Sector Services Training.

1. Community Management and Leadership Skills Training: Promoting grass-roots level leadership

IRM trains managers and presidents of community organizations in community management skills, such as how to manage the organization's records, appraise credit applications to be forwarded to NRSP, establish linkages with other organizations and explore various new opportunities. Select activists who show



potential to work beyond their villages also have the opportunity to undergo leadership management skills training (see box 1). The improved management and leadership capabilities of the grass-roots organizations help increase their sustainability and effectiveness.

To date, a total of 14,344 leaders of community organizations (including 3,583 women) have taken part in the leadership and managerial training programmes.⁴

In addition, in keeping with the devolution plan of the Government of Pakistan, IRM has designed courses to encourage villagers to take part in the electoral process, both as voters and candidates for local-level bodies.

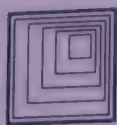
2. Natural Resource Management Training: Enhancing farm productivity

IRM facilitates the transfer of skills, for enhancing land productivity and reducing losses, from government agencies to community organizations. Government officials from line ministries regularly attend meetings with villagers to provide training and information on new techniques in agriculture and livestock. The officials demonstrate the benefits of farming techniques such as improved tillage methods, line sowing, organic farming, sprinkler and pipe irrigation, grafting, and storage methods. In livestock, training covers vaccination and treatment of illnesses. Examples of natural resource management training include bee-keeping, vegetable production, fish farming, and poultry breeding. A cadre of specialists is developed at the village level to further disseminate knowledge and to provide technical support to other villagers. Thus far, IRM has trained a total of 11,018 community members (including 2,951 women).

Box 1: Topics covered by leadership management skills training course

- Role of an activist;
- Leadership and management skills;
- Communication, presentation and motivational skills;
- Situation analysis;
- Need identification;
- How to mobilize local resources;
- Gender and development.

⁴ All data provided in this case study on the training courses has been gathered from 1993, when IRM was still the Human Resources Development Branch of NRSP, i.e., before IRM was established as a distinct entity in 2001.



Women community members learn tailoring.

3. Vocational Skills Training: Creating employment opportunities

IRM provides training in over 80 trades and vocational skills, such as tailoring, welding, tractor repair, candle-making and soap-making. Whenever possible, IRM links up with existing government training programmes, and collaborates with government agencies to tailor and shorten the government courses, to better match the needs and conditions of the rural poor. Special courses have also been designed for persons with disabilities. As of December 2001, 14,156 villagers (including 7,860 women) have been trained.

Private-sector organizations have been put in contact with the villagers to collaborate on projects of mutual interest. Such linkages are especially useful to those who are starting up their own small enterprises, particularly with regard to creating channels through which their product can be marketed.

4. Social Sector Services Training

a. Increasing literacy levels

Many communities have established and manage their own community schools, to deal with the insufficient availability of public education facilities. In order to build the capacity of community schools to provide quality education to rural poor



children, IRM trains teachers in “joyful learning techniques”, which encourage student participation in the classroom and enhance interactive learning. This training is conducted in partnership with the Adult Basic Education Society, a non-governmental organization. The community identifies its own devoted and hard-working teachers to receive the training. As of October 2001, 823 teachers (including 385 women) have been trained.

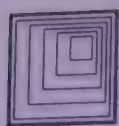
IRM also trains Village Education Committees, formed by the rural poor to manage the schools’ affairs, on how to effectively manage and monitor the schools. This helps to ensure greater accountability among the schools, teachers and villagers.

b. Facilitating access to health facilities

IRM facilitates the training of women villagers to become birth attendants, in partnership with government health departments and the Family Planning Association of Pakistan. The course is designed specifically for rural areas, where infant mortality rate is high (84 per 1,000 live births) due to limited access to health care and unhygienic and unsafe delivery practices. The women, some of whom are already midwives, are chosen by the communities and trained in modern reproductive health practices. 661 women have been trained as birth attendants, as of October 2001.



Welding course: IRM offers training to community members to undertake income-generating activities.



5. Staff Training

IRM provides staff training, focusing primarily on creating a cadre of development professionals and scientists who support and recognize the rural communities as the centre of development. Social mobilization forms an essential part of all professional training events.

D. ACHIEVEMENTS

1. Responsiveness

IRM's activities are responsive to the needs of the rural poor, as they reflect the communities' own perceived priorities for improving their lives. As a matter of principle, IRM supports only those activities that a community deems necessary and wants to implement itself. Training content is developed through a detailed training needs assessment in the community. The community is also responsible for nominating, through mutual consensus, candidates to undergo IRM training.

The solutions to the problems are designed keeping in view the capacity and the resources of the rural poor. An attempt is made to build upon their existing capacities, and to create employment opportunities towards sustainable solutions. For example, instead



Community-level training in livestock curative measures: in high demand.



of waiting for the Government to set up a basic health centre and staff it with outside professionals – a venture that could take time and whose quality the people cannot monitor – IRM trains competent villagers, identified by the community, in basic health care. By charging a fee, these villagers can earn an income, and they bring the benefit of being immediately available within the village.

To the extent possible, IRM uses technical resources already available from government and other agencies, rather than developing parallel resources. If the government is offering training courses on a particular agricultural technique, IRM will help representatives of community organizations to access those courses.

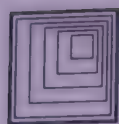
An assessment was conducted in 1999 with 79 of the 374 villagers that had participated in vocational training courses that were held in 1998 in the Rawalakot Region. The study showed that:

- After the training, 62 per cent of the trainees were using their acquired skills, earning an average net income of Rs. 1,885 per month (approximately US\$31, January 2002 exchange rate), while women trainees were earning Rs. 622 (approximately US\$10) per month; and
- Upon starting his/her own business, each trainee, on average, had employed and imparted further training to two other people.

The high extent to which the trainees are using their newly-acquired skills is indicative of the relevance of the training courses offered by IRM.

2. Impact

IRM regularly monitors its work to assess the level to which its programmes have helped reduce poverty. IRM monitoring shows that those who received training have not only improved their incomes directly from their newly-acquired skills, but they have also earned money from serving as resource persons, imparting their knowledge to other villagers.



The training of birth attendants has reduced the infant/mother mortality rate and the health of mothers and children has improved. The training of community school teachers included many women, whose improved status in the community has helped raise the acceptability of girls' education, thus encouraging more villagers to send their daughters to school.

An impact assessment conducted on the leadership management skills training indicated that trainees had become better able to:

- Plan and carry out development initiatives in a systematic manner;
- Prioritize problems;
- Make decisions through consensus;
- Delegate responsibilities for plan implementation;
- Establish local networks to provide various services;
- Develop and maintain linkages with NRSP;
- Organize regular meetings and maintain proper records.

Box 2: Capacity-building of women: The case of Najma

Najma Shakoor was the president of her community organization (CO), Saracha, which nominated her to attend the Leadership and Management Skills Training, organized by IRM-NRSP. While the community tradition frowned upon women taking part in such training, upon completing the training Najma encouraged other women of the CO to also undergo the IRM-NRSP training and to initiate development activities using their newly-acquired skills. Furthermore, Najma motivated members of other COs in the area to create a local network of services. When the number of COs in the network rose to 30, the Women Welfare Organization, an NGO, was set up.

With further training from IRM-NRSP, the Women Welfare Organization is now capable of developing its own proposals to donors and convening workshops with government line agencies and other NGOs. The organization was handed the task of managing 15 schools of the National Education Foundation, and has started giving credit to the mothers of the poorest students.



IRM's programmes have also had a non-tangible impact on the rural poor. Those who have benefited from the training have reported an increased sense of self-worth, and a desire for further advancement. Others have indicated that they are now respected and are seen as role models. Women have particularly benefited from the direct and indirect results of IRM programmes, as they are encouraged to join local groups and play a lead role in the development process. In the words of one rural woman leader: "There was a time when we, the women of the area, had no say in the activities occurring around us. Now things have changed. We are consulted in various endeavours by our men folk".

As a result of the training on political processes, elections have witnessed a large number of candidates, both women and men, winning and creating a new generation of rural leadership with improved gender balance.

E. LESSONS LEARNED

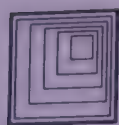
IRM has been instrumental in empowering rural communities through a wide range of training activities. The most notable features of IRM work are highlighted below:

1. Empowering women has an important impact on improving the well-being of the rural poor.

Training rural poor women and raising their income-generating capacity increases their socio-economic status. IRM trains the women as health workers (particularly focusing on women's health) and as teachers, as well as in other vocational, management and leadership skills. The improved services and women's status increases girls' and women's access to better health and education, and contribute to changing discriminatory attitudes towards women.

2. Training on community management and leadership skills must be provided.

Focusing on community management skills training and leadership management skills training helps strengthen grass-roots level organizations and empowers the rural poor to independently



manage and implement their development initiatives. This capacity-building is essential to support the growth and sustainability of community groups.

3. Building links between villagers with government and other organizations increases access to limited resources.

Forging strong village community linkages with various government agencies and other organizations is an effective way to overcome the limitations in resources and to ensure that the pool of development knowledge is shared among all stakeholders. Arranging for representatives of government agencies to regularly visit the community organizations is a simple way to disseminate information on new techniques, and it encourages improved communication between the people and the Government.

4. The success of development activities can be significantly boosted by linking rural poor entrepreneurs with the private sector.

Facilitating linkages between farmers and the private sector contributes to raising the viability of new enterprises run by the farmers, as it helps ensure a reliable source of production inputs and a market for their products.

5. Community participation and ownership is key to sustainability.

Community participation at all stages of development activities nurtures local ownership and contributes to sustainability. One way of ensuring stakeholder participation and ownership is through charging small user fees for the training services.

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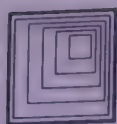
A. BACKGROUND

India is a highly diverse nation, and home to over 1.02 billion people, 71.6 per cent of whom live in rural areas.¹ India has shown significant achievements on a number of development indicators in the past few decades. Since the 1970s, average life expectancy at birth has increased by almost 15 years, to the current 63 years.² Infant mortality rates have dropped dramatically, from 50 per cent in the 1970s, to the current average of 71 per 1,000 live births. School enrolment for primary school-aged children has risen from 68 per cent (1992/1993) to 82 per cent by the end of the decade. Income poverty has also been declining.

At the same time, the country still faces many more challenges. It has the highest concentration of poverty in the world, with more than a quarter of its population living in poverty and large

¹ ESCAP, Statistics Division. Asia and the Pacific in Figures. 2001. Available online at <http://www.unescap.org/stat/statdata/apinfig.htm>.

² Unless otherwise noted, the data in this paragraph is from World Bank Country Brief: India. 2002. Available online at [http://lnweb18.worldbank.org/SAR/sa.nsf/Attachments/indiabrief/\\$File/indiabrief.pdf](http://lnweb18.worldbank.org/SAR/sa.nsf/Attachments/indiabrief/$File/indiabrief.pdf).



disparities within and between states.³ In terms of social indicators, about 20 per cent of all out-of-school children worldwide, aged 6 to 14, are in India. The burden of poverty on women is disproportionately heavy, reflected in the unusual trend of more women than men dying before the age of 35. Many women, and almost half of all children under the age of four, are malnourished. Maternal mortality rates are very high, especially in rural areas, and “maternal deaths in India account for almost 25 per cent of the world’s child birth-related deaths”.⁴

In addition to poverty and geographical isolation, large numbers of the rural poor are constrained by the caste system. *Dalit* (the lowest caste) persons face discrimination and are forced to undergo various indignities in their daily lives, from getting water at the community wells and buying food at the market, to sending their children to school. Because none of these families own land, they are fully dependent on obtaining work as hired labour to maintain their livelihoods. The minimum wage for a female labourer is around Rs. 40 (approximately US\$0.43) per day, but landless agricultural labourers cannot count on having wage employment all year around, and, on average, most manage to obtain work between 240 to 260 days per year.

ANAWIM Trust was formed in 1993 by a group of concerned individuals to work particularly with rural *dalit* groups in Tiruchendur Taluk, a Sub-unit of Tuticorin District, Tamil Nadu State. Tiruchendur Taluk is located on the south-eastern coast of India, and has a population of 276,000, half of whom are rural. The people work primarily in the agriculture and fisheries industries, serving as unskilled labour to earn wages on a day-to-day basis. Others make a living as masons, housemaids, small-scale fishermen, small-scale lime producers and petty traders. The region is ecologically degraded, with severe scarcity of water, poor rainfall and lack of green cover. In this harsh environment, the *dalit* are denied access to resources that could help them change the social and economic conditions in which they live.

³ The data in this paragraph is from World Bank Country Brief: India. 2002. Available online at [http://lnweb18.worldbank.org/SAR/sa.nsf/Attachments/indiabrief/\\$File/indiabrief.pdf](http://lnweb18.worldbank.org/SAR/sa.nsf/Attachments/indiabrief/$File/indiabrief.pdf), unless otherwise noted.

⁴ World Bank Country Brief: India. 2002. Available online at [http://lnweb18.worldbank.org/SAR/sa.nsf/Attachments/indiabrief/\\$File/indiabrief.pdf](http://lnweb18.worldbank.org/SAR/sa.nsf/Attachments/indiabrief/$File/indiabrief.pdf).



B. CONCEPTUAL BASIS

1. Goal

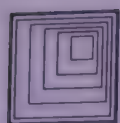
ANAWIM's goal is to support the empowerment of rural communities, so that they may exercise their rights, have increased access to natural resources, and thus have greater control over their lives and livelihoods.

Specific objectives include the following, to:

- Enhance the capabilities, particularly of rural women, to better their health and socio-economic status;
- Initiate and support community income-generation activities, including self-employment activities, through such means as skills training;
- Support rural community activities to protect and manage coastal ecosystems;
- Provide educational facilities for rural children;
- Facilitate the sharing of lessons learned from community-based initiatives, to promote mutual learning among village communities;
- Enable rural communities to identify local concerns and to collectively seek locally-appropriate solutions.



The joy of learning shines at a supplementary education centre.



2. Approach

ANAWIM works closely with women and children of rural communities and targets the poorest of the poor and the *dalit* caste, to facilitate their social and economic empowerment. These groups, from lack of sufficient education and information, are unable to benefit from the services made available to them by the Government.

The organization helps establish women's groups in the villages and provides them with a series of programmes aimed to support the group's activities. ANAWIM's aim is to empower the rural poor so that, instead of becoming dependent on a specific development programme or non-governmental organization (NGO), the women will make their own decisions and take actions to improve their lives.

To ensure the group's independence, ANAWIM works from the very start with a plan to "exit" from the village. This involves not only building the technical skills and capacities of the women, but also the building up of *dalit* women's self-confidence and self-image, so that they are able to take advantage of their new skills and opportunities.

ANAWIM also pays attention to rural poor children's education, as it sees this as a means to reach the community at large. It provides rural poor children with training in computer skills, to prepare them for a society increasingly reliant on information and communication technology.

C. PROGRAMME FOCUS AND ACTIVITIES

ANAWIM's project area covers 40 coastal villages in Tamil Nadu, inhabited by *dalits*, or communities that traditionally have been marginalized by social, cultural, political and economic systems. About 2,800 village families live in these 40 villages. Agricultural labour is the prime source of income in half of the villages. As of October 2002, 1,400 women have membership in ANAWIM groups.



1. Women

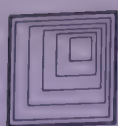
At the village level, ANAWIM organizes *dalit* women into groups, which serve as ANAWIM's counterparts in programme implementation. Each group consists of 20 members, who elect a president, secretary and treasurer. Some villages may have just one group, while others have up to three. Altogether, there are 70 groups in the 40 villages of the region.

The women's groups are provided training on specific skills to improve their economic status, as well as on social issues. The group presidents receive training once a month on various aspects of running village-level work and income-generating activities, which they, in turn, impart to their group members. Secretaries and treasurers have regular meetings organized by ANAWIM, and ANAWIM offers general training programmes for all women members.

The groups are encouraged to have savings and to open bank accounts. The existing groups have decided to put Rs. 50 towards the group savings each month, plus a Rs. 2 subscription fee. The fee is used for the monthly or bimonthly group meetings, where members decide who is to receive the next loan from the group savings. These loans carry a rate of 10 per cent interest per annum and may be used for anything, including medical expenses, education, income-generating activities and emergencies.

The women's groups also may apply to ANAWIM's revolving fund for loans, which are to be used for income-generating activities. As of December 2001, ANAWIM has given over 1,200 women loans of Rs. 2,000 to 5,000 each (approximately US\$21 to US\$54, January 2002 exchange rate), at the rate of 10 per cent interest per annum, guaranteed by the self-help groups. The repayment rate is 100 per cent.

Apart from setting up income-generating activities, the women's groups also organize to lobby District Officials for amenities, such as electricity, and to access government services, such as land registration.



Whenever ANAWIM has a development programme, it is announced at the monthly presidents' meeting. The presidents then decide amongst themselves which groups are to be the next beneficiaries, based on perceived need.

Once the group is active, ANAWIM withdraws from the village, leaving the women in charge of the village's developmental activities. Some groups have reached out to women in neighbouring villages, who have then started to replicate the system and undertake similar activities. These groups from all 40 villages have formed a federation, with 1,400 women members, thus providing the rural poor greater power to lobby government authorities to address their needs.

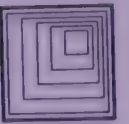
2. Children: Supplementary education centres

Literacy in the area is 30 per cent for women and 50 per cent for men. Most of the children are first-generation learners, who often find difficulty in keeping up with formal schooling. To address this need, ANAWIM runs supplementary education centres for children in 30 villages, in cooperation with another Indian NGO, Child Relief and You (CRY).

The children are provided with tutoring to supplement their formal education at these education centres, many of which operate in the evenings. Various social and development issues are also taught. For example, children are encouraged to deposit some of their pocket money in the bank, so that they establish the habit of saving and can use the money to buy school supplies. Members of the children's committees at each centre coach their peers on proper manners, such as being neat in appearance and being on time.

Some of the centres provide computer training to the children, using a computer that is carried between villages by ANAWIM staff. The communities are involved in the centres through parent committees, which interact with the local supplementary education teacher and provide support to the centre in various forms. For example, some committees provide electricity to the centres, while others donate materials that could be used at the centres. Only the teachers' salaries are provided by ANAWIM.





3. Environment: Introduction of eco-friendly technologies, and their adoption, testing and evaluation by communities

The region in which ANAWIM works is a harsh coastal area with sparse vegetation. Annual rainfall is just 400 mm, most of which runs off into the sea. ANAWIM has therefore introduced eco-friendly techniques that were hitherto unavailable to the villagers. The viability of such techniques are tested in poor village communities and evaluated by the community members. These include:

- Spirulina production (see box 1);
- Toilet building (see box 2);
- Rainwater harvesting;
- Use of fuel-efficient stoves;
- Garden kitchens;
- Sapling planting;
- Bicycle riding.

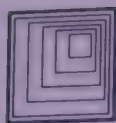
Box 1: The miracle algae: Spirulina

Spirulina is a blue-green algae with two notable features:

- It has a very high protein content, as high as 20 times more per acre than soybeans;
- It can be cultivated in brackish water and non-fertile land, where other crops would not grow.

ANAWIM was first introduced to the algae by the International Ocean Institute, and obtained the technology from ANTENNA Trust, Madurai, which was experimenting with spirulina cultivation. ANAWIM taught two women's groups to cultivate the algae and manage production. ANAWIM buys the spirulina from the women's groups and processes it at its research centre to make nutritional supplements. The supplements are in turn made available to children at the supplementary education centres, where they have been reported to have had beneficial effects on the children's health.





Turning spirulina into a marketable nutritional supplement.

Two-day camps are held on the weekend for children, who learn how to undertake vermi-culture, composting, producing organic fertilizer, and disinfecting of water. They are also taught about renewable energy and planting of saplings. On the second day of camp, children have the opportunity to implement in the villages what they have learned.

ANAWIM training programmes focusing on coastal ecology, environment, eco-technologies, vocational skills and development issues have accounted for over 25,550 participant-days.

D. ACHIEVEMENTS

1. Responsiveness

ANAWIM programmes target rural, landless labourer women and the poorest of the poor from the *dalit* caste. Their empowerment means a dramatic change in the lives of a group that constitutes over 40 per cent of the rural population.

The women's groups have decision-making power with regard to the kinds of projects they wish to implement. ANAWIM's role is to bring them the information and technical assistance on appropriate, eco-friendly techniques, to which they hitherto had had no access.

In starting a new project, local concerns are assessed and addressed through workshops and exposure visits involving both local community members and ANAWIM staff. Whether to go ahead with a project is determined on the basis of the outcomes of such workshops and visits. ANAWIM also periodically conducts impact assessments of the programmes.



2. Impact

ANAWIM programmes and the various techniques it has introduced have had positive effects on the villagers' lives. The rural poor women report an improved standard of living and socio-economic status, due to the ANAWIM training and access to savings and loans. Many *dalit* children attending the supplementary education centres are performing better in formal schools. Teaching villagers on how to de-silt wells has reduced by more than 75 per cent the time women spent fetching water. In Kulasekarapattinam Village, the villagers applied their knowledge from the first project to organize themselves and de-silt three other wells that provided drinking water to the village. Under another project, the building of 200 sanitary toilets has reduced pollution and decreased health problems from which women in particular suffered (see box 2).

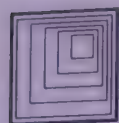
Box 2: Building sanitation facilities

In many rural communities, there are hardly any private or public toilet facilities. Most inhabitants use open fields in the coastal zone, which has resulted in widespread pollution of the coast. The rural poor women suffered the most, as the total lack of privacy compelled them to use the fields only before daybreak or after sunset. As a result, these women were plagued by various medical problems. Toilet building was thus suggested as a priority project.

ANAWIM selected women's groups that had been active for over a year, and which did not have any loan defaulters, to participate in the toilet-building project. Each group's members chose 10 beneficiaries from their group, and each beneficiary contributed Rs. 1,000 (about US\$25) to cover the costs of repair and maintenance. The cost of building the toilets was covered by a grant from the International Ocean Institute. As of October 2002, 200 toilets have been built.

The response was overwhelming. Not only has the building of toilets improved the rural women's health and the environment, but it has helped the women regain their sense of dignity and security.

Currently, ANAWIM builds the toilets through hired labour, but future plans are to train some women members in masonry, so that they may build their own toilets.



True to its goal of fostering self-reliance, ANAWIM has “exited” from five villages between 1993 and 2001. In those villages, the rural poor women manage all development activities, including the management of night schools and tuition centres for the children. The groups enjoy a high level of interest and morale among their members, and monthly meetings are always crowded, with 100 per cent member attendance.

An important impact of ANAWIM activities has been a visible boost in the self-confidence of the women, seen in the improvements in communication skills and heightened awareness of their problems and possible solutions. ANAWIM has supported *dalit* women in their efforts to decide on and build their livelihood security. As a result, the women have begun to depend less and less on factors that are outside their control, such as the moods of upper-caste landowners or the vagaries of the monsoons. They have learned to work together and present a united front, to challenge caste-based discrimination. Particularly with the earnings from the new, loan-funded income-generating activities, women feel that they are now respected in the family as well as in the villages.

By supporting the rural poor, especially the women, to make their own livelihood decisions and to discover the power of coming together as a group, ANAWIM goes a long way towards



Vermi-culture training for members of a dalit women's group.



challenging and changing the local contexts of inequality and injustice. In the words of a president of a woman's group in Mangalavadi village, "Since the women's group was started, the women have been able to get together and unite for a common cause.... Now, the community knows that we women are capable of achievement".

E. LESSONS LEARNED

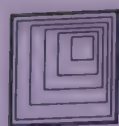
1. Empowering women can lead to remarkable improvements in the quality of life for the entire family.

ANAWIM has found that women tend to be more receptive to new ideas, and are quick to adapt. In general, women tend to adapt well to group cooperation, which increases the effectiveness of the group-based development activities. Through heightened capabilities to work together for social justice, community improvement and income generation, women gain a greater sense of confidence, which enables them to actively take advantage of their new skills and opportunities to improve their lives, as well as those of their families.

2. Social mobilization and group formation are key to empowering the rural poor and to avoiding dependency.

Social mobilization, with a component of group formation, is essential for empowering the rural poor. Groups provide its members important psychological support. Within the groups, the rural poor can discuss common problems and unload some of the emotional burden of poverty and of daily discrimination. On a material level, the group savings give members access to credit. Villagers can also undertake larger community development projects, or make their voices heard by their local governments.

Development organizations should see themselves as "catalysts", which can help link the different development actors and issues, rather than as essential service providers that may inadvertently foster dependency among the rural poor. A plan to "exit" from the communities is useful, to help keep this "catalyst" role in mind.



3. Addressing health and hygiene issues has physical and psychological benefits that also make economic sense.

In addition to the inherent benefit of good health, including emotional well being, there are indirect benefits that are crucial for the rural poor, such as increased productivity and resilience to adversity. Furthermore, good health helps the family avoid the burden of providing care and procuring treatment for sick family members, a costly matter that could easily wipe out a family's savings.

4. Techniques do not have to be highly 'advanced' or complex to be effective.

Often, simple, appropriate remedies can be highly effective and sustainable (such as learning how to ride a bicycle). Attention should be paid to ensure that such techniques are environmentally friendly.

5. Loans should be provided at a low interest rate and channeled to income-generation activities.

The availability of micro-credit opens the door to possibilities for the rural poor to realize some of their dreams. Micro-credit should be accompanied by appropriate training, to facilitate the poor in using the loans wisely, such as for viable income-generating activities. This would also help them to avoid borrowing for consumption purposes from loan sharks at exorbitant interest rates, which traps them in a cycle of indebtedness.

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A. BACKGROUND

During the past two decades, the Philippines has achieved a number of successes in reducing poverty levels. Despite setbacks suffered as a result of the 1997 Asian financial crisis, gross domestic product (GDP) has doubled in this period, and the average GDP annual growth rate has quadrupled.¹ The overall percentage of the population living in poverty has declined to

¹ World Bank, Country at a Glance Tables: Philippines. October 2001. Available online at <http://www.worldbank.org/data/countrydata/countrydata.html>. Accessed 18 July 2002.

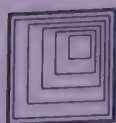
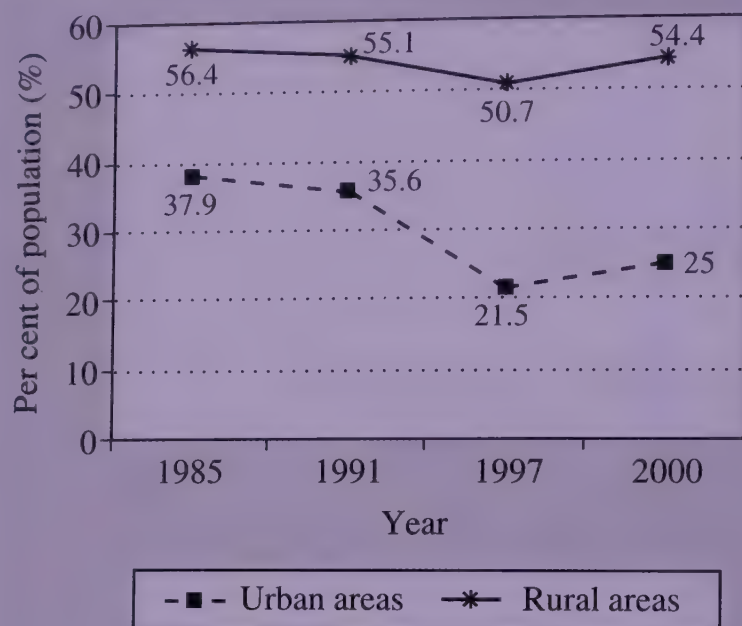


Figure 1: Proportion of population living in poverty (%): Rural vs urban, 1985-2000



Source: Philippine Institute of Development Studies.

40 per cent in 2000. The health status of the people also improved in 20 years, as a greater proportion of the population gained access to better water sources and sanitation.²

Despite such economic and social growth, the benefits have not been enjoyed equally by all segments of Filipino society. In fact, the country has experienced a significant increase in regional and rural-urban inequality. The difference between the proportion of rural and urban populations living in poverty has risen in the last 25 years, and, in 2000, poverty incidence in rural areas was over twice as high as in

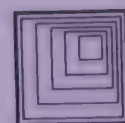
urban areas³ (see figure 1). The disparity exists cross-regionally as well. Between 1985 and 2000, the percentage of the population living in poverty has increased in all regions outside of the National Capital Region (NCR), which is an entirely urban region⁴ (see figure 2).

The Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) is the primary welfare agency of the Government of the Philippines, mandated to provide social welfare and development interventions and services to disadvantaged individuals, families and

² World Bank. *World Development Report 2000/2001*. September 2000. Available online at <http://www.worldbank.org/poverty/wdrpoverty/>. Accessed 10 July 2001.

³ Philippine Institute of Development Studies (PIDS), Economic and Social Database. 2001. Available online at <http://dirp.pids.gov.ph/eismain.html>. Accessed 16 July 2002.

⁴ PIDS, Economic and Social Database. 2001. Available online at <http://dirp.pids.gov.ph/eismain.html>. Accessed 16 July 2002.

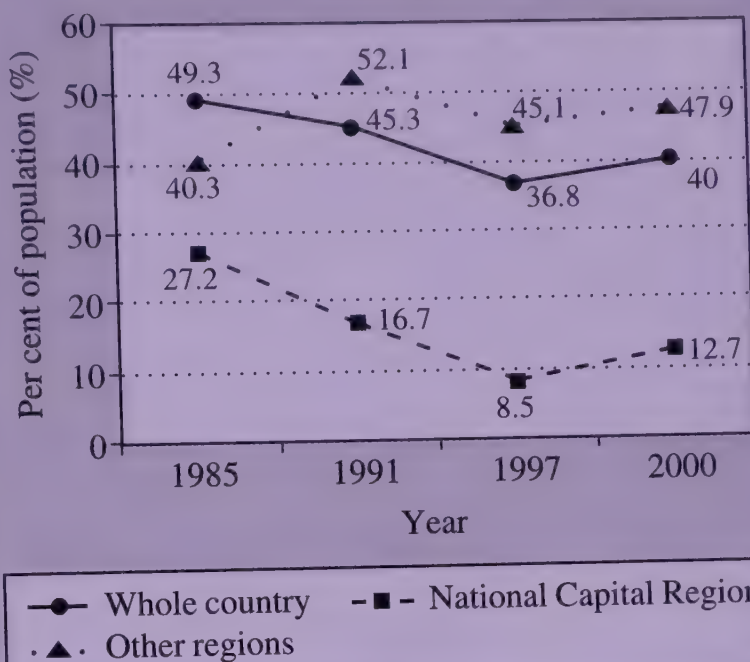


communities, to enable them to become self-reliant and contributing members of society. In keeping with the Local Government Code of 1992, which devolved to the local government units the responsibility of delivering basic social services, DSWD plays a steering role, through setting of policies and standards, and building the capacity of its local-level counterparts.

Through the promulgation of the 1994 Social Reform Agenda, the Government of the Philippines called for effective social reform that would raise the quality of life of the Filipino people. Among the flagship programmes launched under the Social Reform Agenda, the Comprehensive and Integrated Delivery of Social Services (CIDSS) focuses specifically on poverty alleviation through empowering the poor – both rural and urban – and facilitating their active role in improving their lives. CIDSS is implemented by DSWD as the lead agency, in partnership with the Department of Health, Department of Education, Culture and Sports, the Department of Interior and Local Government, and several other government agencies.

CIDSS started its operation in 1994 in 150 *barangays*⁵ based in 75 of the poorest municipalities in 33 provinces. In 1999, it widened its scope to reach all 79 provinces of the Philippines. To date, more than 700,000 poor families have been served in 1,084 municipalities, covering 3,893 communities/*barangays*. (See Figure 3 for the local administration structure.)

Figure 2: Proportion of population living in poverty (%): Regional, 1985-2000



Source: Philippine Institute of Development Studies.

⁵ The *barangay* is the smallest local government unit in the Philippines. In a municipality, a *barangay* must have a population of at least 2,000, while in an urban centre, it must have at least 5,000.

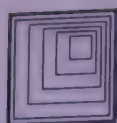
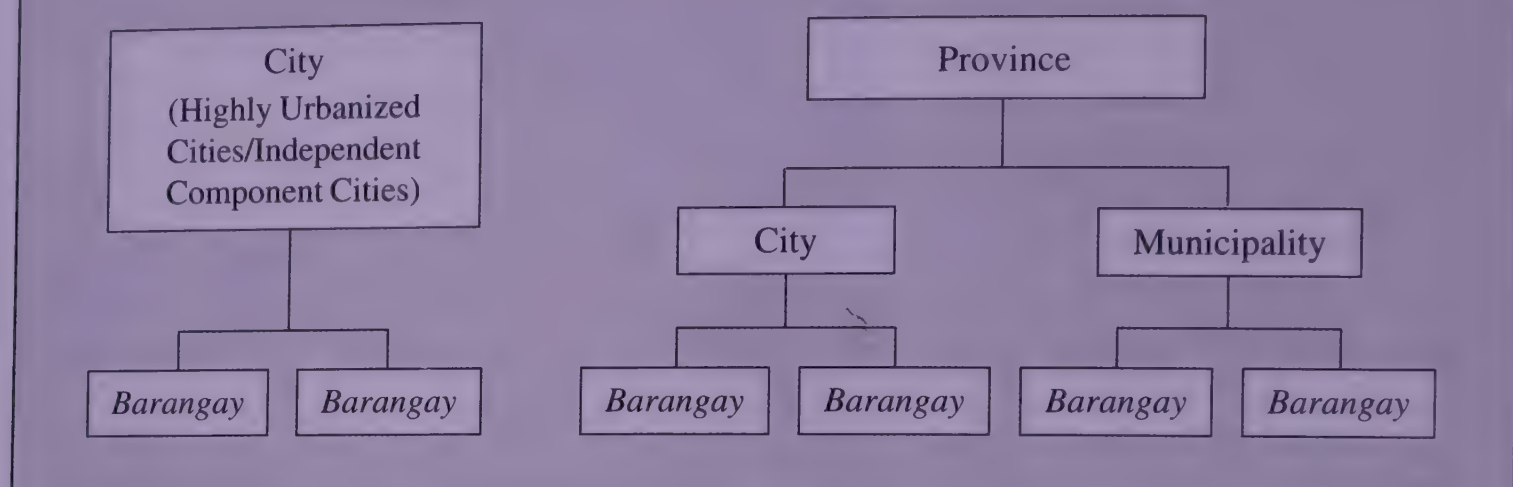


Figure 3: Philippine Local Administration Structure



B. CONCEPTUAL BASIS

1. Goal

CIDSS's main goal is to empower disadvantaged families and communities, so that they can access basic services and better manage their resources, and ultimately be capable of taking charge and improving their quality of life.

2. Approach

There are four components to the CIDSS approach:

- People, starting from the family level, are viewed as the basic movers for change and progress.
- Community members are involved in the entire management process, from the situational analysis to the planning, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation stages. This is called the 'community organizing' strategy.
- 33 indicators that were developed to measure minimum basic needs (MBN) are used to prioritize the needs of the poorest, which allows focused targeting of CIDSS activities.
- Different sectors are encouraged to focus or synchronize their resources, services and interventions in the delivery of services, in order to have an integrated strategy to combat poverty.



DSWD is required to turn over CIDSS management to the local government unit within five years of instigating the programme. This means that from the onset, the CIDSS programme is built into the community and focuses on nurturing the capabilities of the rural community members, so that community-based poverty alleviation efforts will continue over the long term.

C. PROGRAMME FOCUS AND ACTIVITIES

The programme involves the following stages:

1. Social Preparation

After first securing the approval of municipal government officials, a CIDSS implementer approaches a targeted community through the leaders of the *barangay*, to raise awareness of CIDSS and secure interest in implementing CIDSS in the *barangay*.

The implementer then facilitates the formation of a municipal technical working group, comprising municipal stakeholders such as the mayor and representatives from various sectoral government agencies, including those for social welfare, planning and development, agriculture, health, and education.

Another technical working group is formed at the *barangay* level,⁶ comprising the *barangay* captain,⁷ other *barangay* officials and community representatives, such as midwives and teachers. This *barangay* technical working group serves as the core group for CIDSS implementation, and works in close collaboration with the CIDSS implementer. It also represents local concerns to the municipal technical working group.⁸

⁶ This is called the Barangay Inter-Agency Committee (BIAC).

⁷ The *barangay* captain is the elected leader of the *barangay*. He/she has the authority to mediate local disputes, enforce all laws and ordinances within the *barangay*, call and preside over the *barangay* council and assembly, and prepare annual executive and supplemental budgets of the *barangay*.

⁸ This is called the Municipal Inter-Agency Committee (MIAC).



The members of the *barangay* technical working group then undergo training on MBN indicators, led by the CIDSS implementer. These 33 MBN indicators were developed by CIDSS to allow the systematic collection of data, which can be used to assess the most immediate basic needs of the poorest of the community. By using these indicators, the needs of the poorest can be prioritized and used as a basis to plan projects and activities to address them.

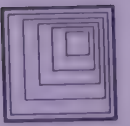
Box 1: MBN Indicator Examples

33 MBN indicators are used by CIDSS communities to assess their poverty situation and to prioritize the unmet needs of the poorest. The MBN indicators include:

- Family with income above subsistence threshold level;
- Couples practise family planning in the last 6 months;
- Children 3 to 5 years old attend day care/preschool;
- Family members are involved in at least one legitimate people's organization/association for community development;
- Family has sanitary toilet;
- There are no severely and moderately underweight children aged under 5 years;
- Family members are able to vote at elections;
- Family has access to potable water (faucet/deep well) within 250 meters (10 minute-walk);
- Head of family is employed;
- 6 to 12 year-olds attend elementary school;
- Family members are not sick with diarrhoea.

2. Situational Analysis

Once the training is completed, the *barangay* technical working group and volunteers from the community take part in participatory data gathering on MBN indicators. They analyse the data, list the needs and problems and prioritize them.



The outcomes are shared with members of the *barangay* through community assembly, and through posting on a community bulletin board, which is a simple, yet effective, means of raising awareness within the whole community. The information on the board, which includes the status of their unmet needs, gives people the opportunity to reflect on the realities of their situation and the possible actions that they could take to tackle specific problems.

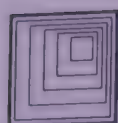
3. Formulation of Development Plans

Based on the MBN data, the *barangay* technical working group, with technical assistance from the CIDSS implementer, appraises the available resources and formulates a neighbourhood development plan, which is consolidated into the Community Development Plan.

4. Programme Development and Management

The *barangay* technical working group designs and implements development activities in line with the neighbourhood development plan, which are to be undertaken with local government funds. A separate plan for CIDSS interventions, to be funded by CIDSS, is also drawn up to supplement these activities. CIDSS interventions are designed to match the institutional structure of the *barangay* and municipality.

Various sources of support are developed to sustain community-level efforts. Local neighbourhood plans are successively integrated into development plans at the *barangay* level through municipal, provincial and regional levels, and up to the national level. This institutionalizes the initiatives at the local level and secures their inclusion in the approved national budget of all concerned agencies. Local government units provide a counterpart to the national funding, through direct funding, technical support, administrative support, physical assets and other logistical support. Community members also contribute, primarily through providing labour.



Box 2: Sample activities undertaken to address MBN

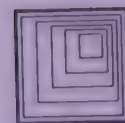
A variety of activities can be undertaken to address a rural community's unmet MBN. The following are some activities that have been implemented by communities under the CIDSS programme.

<i>MBN issue</i>	<i>Activity</i>
Income generation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Skills training with livelihood component• “Cash for Work” and “Food for Work” programmes• Collateral-free or interest-free seed capital provision• Infrastructure development (e.g., water reservoir construction)
Health care	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Hiring of midwife (e.g., to come once a week; costs shared among 5 <i>barangays</i>)• Supplemental feeding for children• Capability-building/training for healthy hygiene and sanitation• Continuous information dissemination on healthy environment• Immunization/deworming• Family planning
People's participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Community participation in planning and implementation of CIDSS activities (e.g., people's theatre to raise awareness)• Creation of new people's organizations from CIDSS sectoral welfare committees• Community representation to the Municipal Development Council for budget and project prioritization needed in the community• Replication of CIDSS approach in non-CIDSS <i>barangays</i>, using local government funds and other sources• Continuous capability-building and training• Full participation in election processes

5. Localization of the CIDSS programme

As DSWD is obligated to turn over CIDSS management to the local government unit within five years of programme initiation, the final step is to ensure that the identified mechanisms and structures are institutionalized and sustainable.

Training opportunities are offered to local community organizers on areas such as situational analysis, planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation, leadership training and community organizing.



Families benefit from pumps installed through a CIDSS programme.

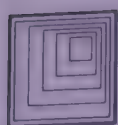
D. ACHIEVEMENTS

1. Responsiveness

CIDSS targets the poorest of the poor⁹ and many remote villages, where there are only three *barangays* for every municipality, have been reached through the programme.

The CIDSS community organization strategy ensures that the communities are involved in the entire project management process, thus guaranteeing that local concerns are taken up and addressed through development projects. Monitoring and evaluation are participatory, involving all stakeholders, are built into project implementation and conducted on a regular basis. Lessons and insights are then fed back into the programme design. While CIDSS implementers play a key role in mobilizing communities and provide technical support, the main decision-making power lies in the hands of local community members. The role of the CIDSS implementers is to facilitate the communities in identifying their real needs and the means to address those needs.

⁹ Particularly those classified as 5th and 6th class municipalities or low-income Local Government Units.



Many of the community development projects aim to increase the target group's access to certain services or goods. For example, communities successfully completed projects that gave them access to clean water, markets for their goods, or a locally-generated power supply, or allowed them to send their children to school. In addition, the activities did not only provide avenues for growth and interaction, but simultaneously addressed the members' income and livelihood needs, particularly through paid labour, which is a primary need that anchors almost all MBN.

The programme empowers community members to:

- Take the lead in tackling the needs of, and problems in, their community;
- Work together towards poverty eradication by joining the community's core group of development actors, or by taking part in the activities.

The convergence strategy of CIDSS also facilitates closer ties among the branch ministries and local government, especially as the former have agreed to collaborate through CIDSS. In fact, the ministries have shown a remarkable matching of resources (e.g., financial, technical, physical) to CIDSS inputs.

2. Impact

CIDSS has a highly evolved system of evaluation with excellent programme documentation.

An independent assessment of the CIDSS programme was conducted in 1999 by the University of the Philippines-College of Public Administration and Governance. Changes in MBN indicator values in CIDSS *barangays* and non-CIDSS *barangays* were assessed, using 1994 and 1997 MBN survey data. The study showed that there is a significant reduction in 28 out of 33 MBN indicators in CIDSS areas, while only 18 indicators have improved in non-CIDSS areas. The percentage change for all the 33 indicators in CIDSS areas is -7.7 per cent, showing a general reduction in unmet MBN.



The success of a community's activities boosts its self-confidence and helps empower it to take the lead in meeting its needs, and tackling the problems it faces.

The effects on the community members is described by a chairman of one *barangay* council:

“...the beneficiaries [of the CIDSS programme] have learned to organize themselves; implement programmes collectively; handle their funds and resources efficiently and represent themselves in lobbying for projects in government institutions and non-government organizations.

The people's new-found attitude of self-reliance filled in for the limitations of both the local government and national government agencies in the delivery of social services.”¹⁰

While many communities may have been sceptical at the start, the success of the programme has increased the target group's enthusiasm and commitment to the CIDSS programme.

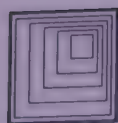
In recognition of its effectiveness, Executive Order No. 443 was issued on 24 September 1997, declaring the CIDSS as the National Delivery Mechanism for the MBN approach.

E. LESSONS LEARNED

1. Political leadership is a key to programme success.

The implementation of the CIDSS programme has been shown to be most successful where there is strong support and involvement of government officials, including the municipal mayor and the *barangay* captain. At the same time, CIDSS activities provide a means for the *barangay* leaders to demonstrate their quality of leadership and commitment. Their involvement in the community-based activities and the resulting improvement in the community members' lives can significantly improve the rural poor's faith in the government.

¹⁰ Jowel S. Canuday, “Empowering a village”, Sinag Pilipinas, 10-16 September 2001, p. 3.



2. Interventions that correspond to top needs are more likely to succeed.

A visible increase in available (social) services to the community is essential to foster community enthusiasm, which is a critical element to the success of the programme. In striking contrast, CIDSS has been less successful where a noticeable gap existed between the MBN priorities and the actual project, as well as between the necessary levels of resources and the actual amount available. Implementers should focus their energy on addressing the priorities determined by the MBN situational analysis, thus increasing their accountability to the community.

3. A participatory approach can change community scepticism into active interest and enthusiasm.

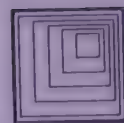
Rural poor community members will actively participate in the activities, out of their concern for their communities. While this enthusiasm may not be forthcoming at first, the success of the activities fosters community enthusiasm. A snowballing effect may be seen where the CIDSS activities have tangible effects and more poor community members become interested in participating.

While community participation in the evaluation stage is still limited, DSWD is committed to making project evaluation truly participatory, including through maximizing the use of the community data bulletin boards.

4. Programme orientation and capability building activities must be provided.

Raising the awareness of the rural poor community on their role in development and the CIDSS programme, and building its members' capacity for organization and implementing development activities are central to CIDSS. Through the CIDSS implementer and DSWD, the rural poor communities are provided with training in such subjects as:

- MBN indicators;
- Data bulletin board installation and use;
- Prioritizing beneficiaries.



Such awareness raising and training activities are important in that they develop the individual capabilities of the rural poor, which are necessary to ensure effective and efficient programme implementation and programme sustainability, particularly after its management is handed over to the local government.

5. Resources and services should complement each other for maximum efficiency.

Efficiency in the use of resources and sustainability can be ensured by institutionalizing the cooperative relationships among the actors, including communities, government departments at the municipal level, and the *barangay* government unit. Institutionalization of resource flow is particularly effective for long-term sustainability. In the CIDSS case, the incorporation of the *barangay* development plan into the community development plan ensures that local needs are reflected in the plans of the upper levels of government, which can facilitate appropriate budgetary allocation. Local government agencies can also show remarkable levels of matching resources. One CIDSS assessment notes that: “[CIDSS’s] implementation record shows the capacity of the programme to expand rapidly, apparently without creating strain on the central administration”,¹¹ indicating bright prospects for the programme’s long-term sustainability.

¹¹ Australian AID Philippines Vulnerable Group Facility Design Document, June 1999.

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A. BACKGROUND

Sri Lanka, a country of 19.4 million¹ people, enjoys sustained economic growth, has a high per capita income, and has made significant achievements in health, education and rural-urban and gender-equity.² At the same time, 25 per cent of the population still live below the poverty line, and the country continues to suffer from the consequences of over 20 years of civil strife. This conflict has taken away resources from social sectors, which could have benefited the poor.

¹ As of 2000, according to World Development Indicators database, April 2002.

² IFAD, "Evaluation Profile" No. 4, April 2002.



The Hambantota District in southern Sri Lanka is one of the least developed districts in the country, where the poor continue to live with limited prospects for development, hampered by a harsh climate and minimal infrastructure.

The Women's Development Federation (WDF) of Hambantota developed in 1989 from the Poverty Alleviation Programme of the Government of Sri Lanka. Under this governmental programme, government social mobilizers organized the women of the District into a network of Kantha Samiti (KS), or women's development committees, around health issues. These women "wanted to ensure that they could sustain themselves after the [government] programme ceased".³ Thus, they began organizing common funds for emergencies and income-generating loans.

WDF has now grown into a completely self-managed people's organization formed by rural women in the very poor district. It has over 29,000 members and 3,500 staff.

B. CONCEPTUAL BASIS

1. Goal

WDF focuses on human resources development through capacity building in financial resources management, human resource management, technical skills development and institution building, to empower rural poor women to improve their lives.

2. Approach

Social mobilizers provide training to members. The crux of the capacity-building comes through 'doing', that is, through a hands-on learning process. With this combination of training and learning-by-doing, members build their skills and knowledge to keep the organization running.

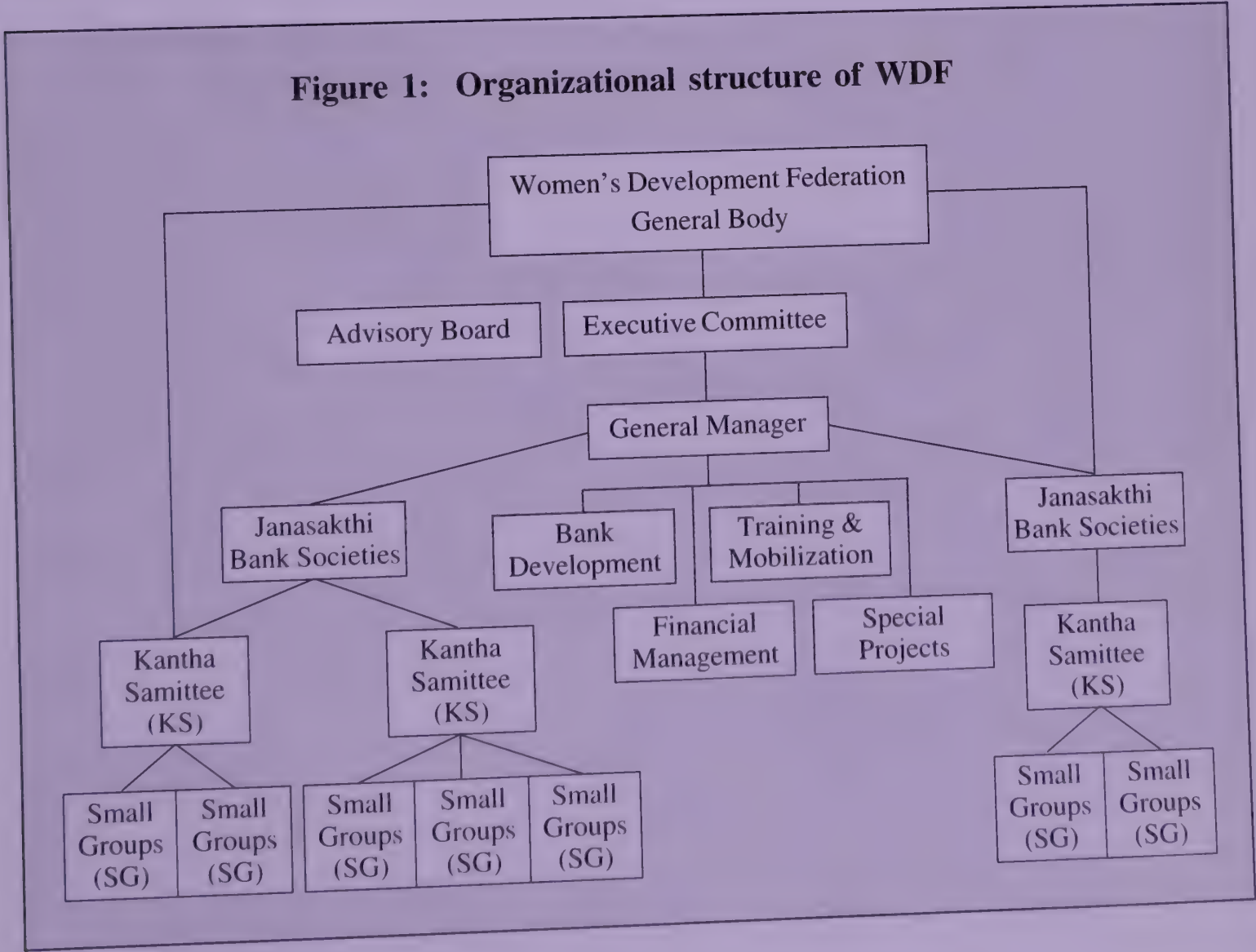
³ W.M. Leelasena and Chitrani Dhammika, "Women Banking for Success: Women's Development Federation (WDF) in Sri Lanka", in *Speaking Out: Women's Economic Empowerment in South Asia*, 1996, p. 128-129.

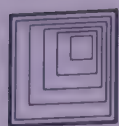


C. PROGRAMME FOCUS AND ACTIVITIES

WDF has a well-developed organizational structure, modelled after that of Bangladesh’s Grameen Bank (see figure 1). At the grass-roots level, small groups of five women are formed. Most needs are addressed within each group, which meets at least weekly to discuss problems and solutions, and to conduct financial transactions. The small groups start their savings pool, from which loans are made to the members. At the village-level, the small groups form the Kantha Samithi (KS), or women’s development committees. The leaders of 8 to 10 KSs form the Janasakthi Bank Societies, which are run like professional banking institutions and make available larger loans for income-generating activities and housing improvement. WDF is a federation of the 465 KSs represented by their leaders, who elect the Executive Committee each year to manage the federation.

Figure 1: Organizational structure of WDF





Activities primarily centre on microcredit functions, through which members' management, leadership and teamwork skills are developed. Peer pressure serves as 'collateral', which ensures the high rate of loan repayment (as high as 95 to 100 per cent). The small groups also establish emergency funds, and exchange labour within groups. This exchange of labour, in which men also participate, has become an important aspect of social development in the community.

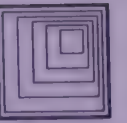
Social mobilizers are key to the WDF approach. Their main purpose is to help enable rural poor individuals and communities to identify their problems, and to motivate them into forming self-help groups. These groups are then assisted by the social

Box 1: Who are Social Mobilizers?

Social mobilizers are mostly volunteers from the community who have been trained to help their communities. The more experienced social mobilizers train younger village-level workers on skills and issues such as:

- ☐ Living with the community
- ☐ Learning from the community
- ☐ Planning together with the community
- ☐ Working together with the community
- ☐ Starting with what the people know
- ☐ Building up with the resources that people have
- ☐ Learning by example and experience
- ☐ Introduction of a method rather than a specific activity
- ☐ Implementing holistically instead of sectorally
- ☐ Accepting change and dynamism instead of a static situation
- ☐ Developing self-strength in place of a survival mentality
- ☐ Developing collective strength

The success of WDF's programmes relies on the effectiveness of the social mobilizers, who maintain regular contact with WDF groups at the community level.



mobilizers to utilize their combined strengths in development activities to improve their standard of living. For example, social mobilizers help nurture a credit culture through promoting regular savings habits among members, and provide training in maintaining reliable records and simple book-keeping. Additional training opportunities are made available to WDF members in agricultural and self-employment skills, as well as in entrepreneurship.

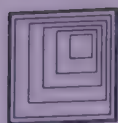
Capacity-building of the WDF members takes place gradually, in a hands-on manner:

“For example, five women gather together in one of their homes. Each week they are obligated to bring their savings. It may be a fistful of rice kept back from each family meal or a few rupees received from the sale of some garden produce, but it introduces women into the habit of savings. Then the group joins in managing some of their consumption expenditure through bulk purchases, or one member only travelling to the market. The advantages of group action are learned. Then the members also discuss health and social problems. They begin to appreciate their ability to learn from, and to support, each other. As savings accumulate, each member participates by devising a scheme to improve their family’s lot and to borrow money for that purpose under reasonable conditions. The skills of managing one’s life are gradually learned, not least by observing others but also through personal experience and the availability of training.”⁴

Through such small steps, the confidence and abilities of the rural poor women are gradually built up.

WDF is financially self-sustaining and no longer relies on external sources of funding to cover its expenses. In fact, it now generates a surplus of funds, just from the members’ savings.

⁴ Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, *Making an Impact: Innovative HRD Approaches to Poverty Alleviation*, 1996, p. 108.



WDF is building up its “reserves and insurance funds to cover unavoidable loan defaults and other losses connected with its banking activities” and also invests part of the surplus to ensure long-term sustainability. The funds available to WDF have increased from Rs. 3.8 million to 154.6 million⁵ between 1991 and 2000.

D. ACHIEVEMENTS

1. Responsiveness

WDF is run and managed wholly by the target group. Thus, the members’ perspectives and initiatives are incorporated into WDF programme design and activities. Immediate decisions are made primarily within the small groups, the basic building blocks of WDF. On a larger level, the KS leaders elect the Executive Committee of the WDF, thus ensuring that local voices are reflected in WDF management.

In 1989, when WDF was started, “approximately one-third of the population [of Hambantota] was living under adverse health conditions with no access to potable water or sanitation. Furthermore, most of the population was indebted to local money lenders and pawnbrokers who often charged in excess of 200 per cent interest per annum”.⁶ WDF emerged in a response to such conditions, and continues to be responsive to the needs of its members today.

2. Impact

“WDF’s work has contributed directly to impact in visibly improved health and nutritional conditions, social integration and improved livelihoods among its members in Hambantota.”⁷

⁵ Rs. 3.89 million = US\$40,100; Rs. 154.6 million = US\$1.6 million. Based on Rs. 97.00 = US\$1.00 exchange rate, November 2002.

⁶ W.M. Leelasena and Chitrani Dhammika, 1996, p. 128.

⁷ Letter from UNDP Assistant Resident Representative Sri Lanka, 2 November 2001.



Box 2: From Destitution to Self-reliance: Premawathie and WDF

I have four children. Two of them are unable to walk due to a nervous ailment. My husband was a farmer, but he died in 1998. We were destitute. The money I had borrowed from a money lender for agricultural activities, which I had hoped to continue after my husband's death, was spent on my husband's funeral. I had no money for my daily expenses or for my children's education. I managed to plant some soya, but since I had no money to buy pesticides or fertilizer, the harvest was very poor. No bank would give me a loan because no one would guarantee it.

It was then that I was advised by a friend to join a group of five women in the village. Soon I became the Treasurer of that group and I opened an account in the Badagiriya Janashakthi Bank.

The first loan I took was only Rs. 1,500* and I spent it to plant mung bean. When I sold my harvest, I was able to repay my debts, including the earlier loan I had taken before my husband's death and the recent loan from the Janashakthi Bank. I am now free of all my debts. I do not have to wrack my brains to find cash for household expenses. I feel great relief.

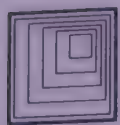
I ask you, who would give a poor widow like me a Rs. 20,000** loan except the members of my group of five? I repay my loans regularly, because otherwise I would be letting down the group.

My whole life has changed because of the Janasakthi Banking system. Many women like me have been strengthened and given self-confidence. They call this empowerment of women. Some years before all these good things happened, I would never have had the confidence or courage to take such large loans [by our village standards]. But when you deal with the Janasakthi Banks and you do well, you have great hope for the future.

Taking the advice of a Janasakthi bank official, Premawathie has diversified her income-generating activities to protect herself against the severe droughts which frequently strike the region, and begun a poultry farm. Her monthly income is now over Rs. 3,000.

* Approximately US\$15.50, November 2002 exchange rate.

** Approximately US\$206.



Rural poor women have gained much self-confidence and self-esteem, which has changed their position in their families, communities and society, thus helping them to break out of a “psychological poverty trap”. Documented impact on the well-being of the rural poor women members includes:

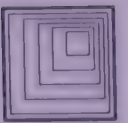
- The members of WDF are “highly active, extremely articulate, reflecting a high level of self-confidence and possess... a clear vision of what they [are] doing”.⁸
- Rural women have greater mobility, are no longer isolated on their farmsteads, and interact more with other women.
- Group solidarity through the five-member groups, particularly through labour exchange, helps alleviate some of the burden the rural women must bear.
- The women can also discuss personal and economic problems with other small group members, which many find a relief.
- The rural poor women feel empowered to speak out in public and to take leadership roles through the KS. These “have made women more confident than before in dealing with authority figures”. Instead of lowering their heads in the presence of government officials, they now “discuss issues with authority figures”.⁹
- This newly-found economic power – “the ability to save money, borrow and pay back loans”¹⁰ – has increased women’s self-confidence, and has also raised their position within the family.

Participation in WDF has given rural poor women access to many new tangible things hitherto denied them, including land to cultivate, income (e.g., from their businesses), credit from commercial banks, and household goods. Emergency loans at the

⁸ Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, *Making an Impact: Innovative HRD Approaches to Poverty Alleviation*, 1996, p. 108.

⁹ W.M. Leelasena and Chitrani Dhammika, 1996, p. 137.

¹⁰ Ibid.



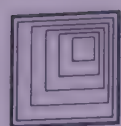
small group level have liberated poor rural families from the exploitative and crushing rates of interest charged by village money-lenders. It has also helped to increase their effective financial resources. The businesses of women entrepreneurs are boosted through a network of larger markets, which are linked with the WDF and KS.

WDF places particular emphasis on capacity building of its members and staff. Through its participatory management systems and procedures, it has facilitated the development of management capacity at all levels of the organization, which ensures the long-term viability of the organization.

Decreases in malnutrition levels have been recorded and immunization of children has increased in the 465 villages in which WDF is active. In the past, the level of immunization was low because parents were not sufficiently motivated and had difficulty in accessing health facilities, and health officers did not have effective means of reaching the people. WDF addressed this by creating awareness among mothers, arranging for health officers to come to central points in the villages and organizing mothers to bring their children to be immunized through government health services.



Grass-root building blocks: weekly meeting of a small group.



WDF has developed strong relationships at the local level with agencies of the central government and Provincial Councils that provide health and nutritional services, agricultural extension services, and other development-related services. It is a two-way relationship: WDF contacts relevant agencies to obtain services required by its members, while government agencies contact WDF to organize such activities as community immunization programmes and distribution of nutritional supplements to malnourished children and expectant mothers. WDF activities have helped ensure that government agencies pay more attention to the poorest of the poor in rural Sri Lanka.

Finally, WDF is viewed as a role model for the country, and other women's organizations in Sri Lanka have been formed to emulate WDF.

E. LESSONS LEARNED

WDF's growth as an organization and its members' achievements over the past decade point to the resilience and appropriateness of the WDF model. Efforts have been made in other areas of Sri Lanka to replicate the structures and successes of WDF. Four elements can be highlighted as contributing to the success of the organization wholly-owned by its target group, namely, rural poor women.

1. Focusing on women helps improve the quality of living for rural families, effectively and efficiently.

Women bear the brunt of poverty, but usually tend not to participate in large community-level development programmes. Yet, it has been found that increasing women's income tends to translate more into benefits, such as improved health, for the entire family, particularly the children. By reaching rural poor women through development activities, the whole family unit can be vitalized to break the cycle of poverty. Women also tend to be more conscientious in making their loan repayments. Alienation of the men can be avoided by the fact that the loans can support family enterprises, and that men also enjoy the benefits secured through their wives' loans.



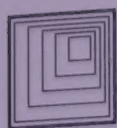
High-tech comes to the village: a WDF loan helped a member to get a freezer for yoghurt making.

2. Social mobilization is crucial to tapping the potential and collective strengths of the poor towards development.

The success of WDF is based on the social mobilization of the rural poor, which lies behind the active participation of members and staff in all levels of WDF activities. Social mobilization taps into the abilities and assets of the rural poor, and redirects them towards development. The success of the more visible programmes, such as microcredit and health programmes, is built on the foundation of solid social mobilization.

3. A well-established organizational structure helps ensure that rural poor women participate actively from the grass-roots level up to the federation level.

Intimately tied to the importance of social mobilization is WDF's organizational structure. The multi-tiered structure gives rural poor women members a sense of ownership over the organization, as their voices are reflected in decisions made at all levels. It also ensures that WDF is accountable to the members.



Banking comes to the people: 67 banks at the village level serve WDF members.

The organization also provides support to members at all levels, which is backed by experienced, capable and committed individuals on the WDF Advisory Board.

4. Poverty alleviation requires a multi-pronged approach, backed by secure economic growth.

Poverty is the result of many factors, and must therefore be tackled on multiple fronts. WDF's approach is effective because it addresses economic development (through savings and credit), building of social capital (through group formation), health (through nutrition programmes and health clinics) and education and literacy ("barefoot" libraries). In particular, the visible success of the programme in improving the target group's livelihood and in meeting its needs has led to a strong sense of commitment to, and support for, WDF among rural poor communities.

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